

THE BRITISH ACADEMY



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PAPERS READ AT
THE MILTON TERCENTENARY
1908

[*From the Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. III*]

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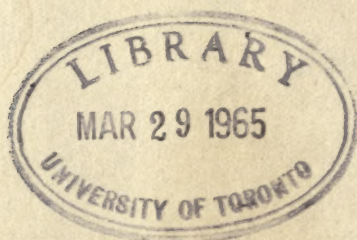
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THE BRITISH ACADEMY
THE TERCENTENARY OF MILTON'S BIRTH

INAUGURAL MEETING
AT THE THEATRE, BURLINGTON GARDENS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1908
(*The Eve of the Tercentenary*)

LINES
By GEORGE MEREDITH, O.M.

ORATION
By DR. A. W. WARD
MASTER OF PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE; FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

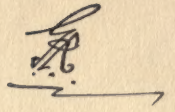
SUMMARY OF ADDRESS ON MILTON
AND MUSIC

By SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE, M.V.O., M.A., Mus.D.
ORGANIST OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY; KING EDWARD PROFESSOR OF MUSIC IN THE
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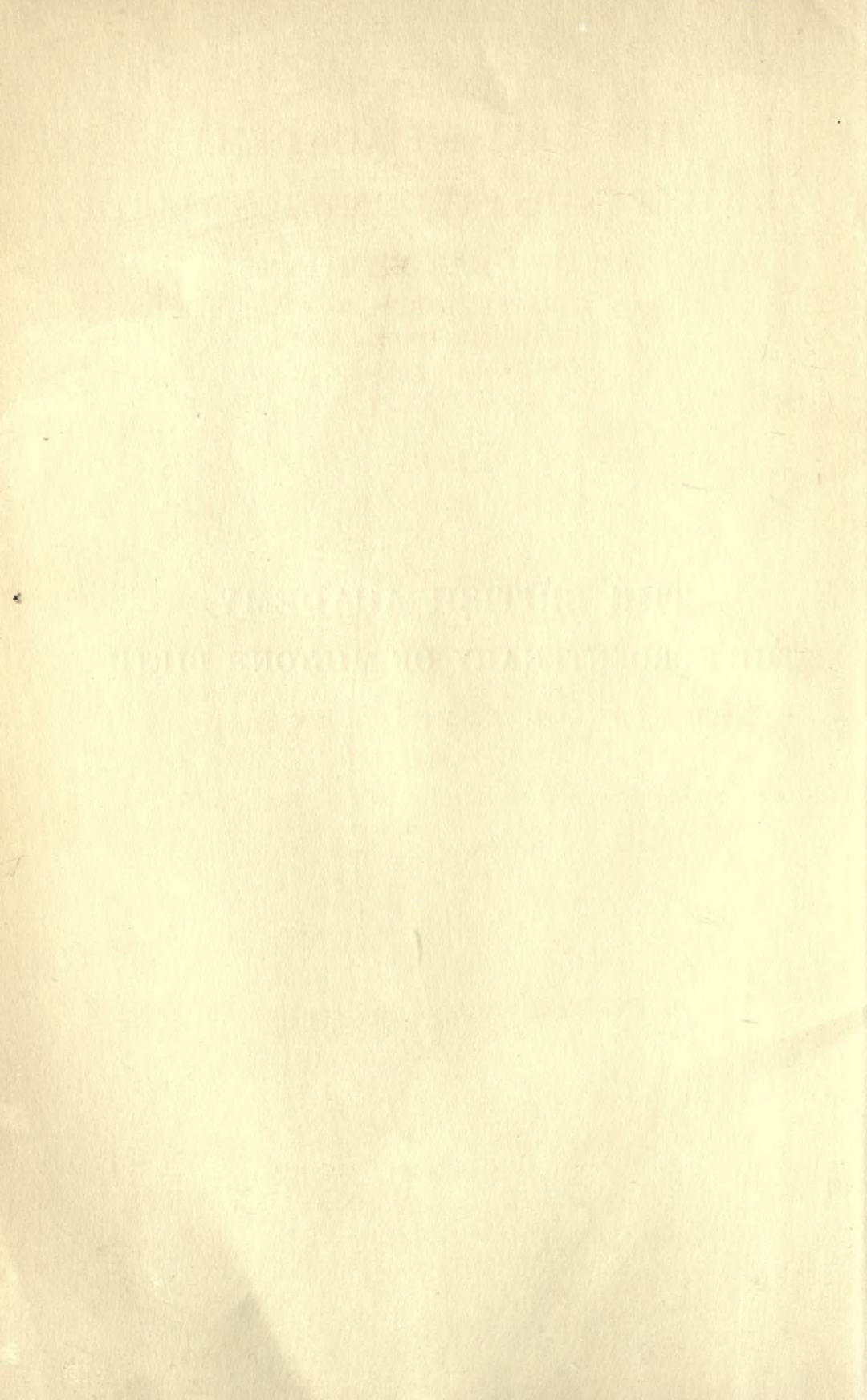
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

1911-1912

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LINES

By GEORGE MEREDITH, O.M.

Written in honour of the occasion

MILTON

December 9, 1608: December 9, 1908

WHAT splendour of imperial station man,
The Tree of Life, may reach when, rooted fast,
His branching stem points way to upper air
And skyward still aspires, we see in him
Who sang for us the Archangelical host
Made Morning by old Darkness urged to the abyss;
A voice that down three centuries onward rolls;
Onward will roll while lives our English tongue,
In the devout of music unsurpassed
Since Piety won Heaven's ear on Israel's harp.

The face of Earth, the soul of Earth, her charm,
Her dread austerity; the quavering fate
Of mortals with blind hope by passion swayed,
His mind embraced, the while on trodden soil,
Defender of the Commonwealth, he joined
Our temporal fray, whereof is vital fruit,
And choosing armoury of the Scholar, stood
Beside his peers to raise the voice for Freedom:
Nor has fair Liberty a champion armed
To meet on heights or plains the Sophister
Throughout the ages, equal to this man,
Whose spirit breathed high Heaven, and drew thence
The ethereal sword to smite.

Were England sunk
Beneath the shifting tides, her heart, her brain,
The smile she wears, the faith she holds, her best,
Would live full-toned in the grand delivery
Of his cathedral speech: an utterance
Almost divine, and such as Hellespont,

Crashing its breakers under Ida's frown,
 Inspired: yet worthier he, whose instrument
 Was by comparison the coarse reed-pipe;
 Whereof have come the marvellous harmonies,
 Which, with his lofty theme, of infinite range,
 Abash, entrance, exalt.

We need him now,

This latest Age in repetition cries:
 For Belial, the adroit, is in our midst;
 Mammon, more swoln to squeeze the slavish sweat
 From hopeless toil: and overshadowingly
 (Aggrandized, monstrous in his grinning mask
 Of hypocritical Peace,) inveterate Moloch
 Remains the great example.

Homage to him

His debtor band, innumerable as waves
 Running all golden from an eastern sun,
 Joyfully render, in deep reverence
 Subscribe, and as they speak their Milton's name,
 Rays of his glory on their foreheads bear.

GEORGE MEREDITH.

ORATION

By DR. A. W. WARD

TERCENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN MILTON

ORATION BY A. W. WARD

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

IN the absence, for a cause which we all sincerely regret, of the President of the British Academy, it falls to me, most unworthy of so honourable a charge, to welcome, on the eve of the Tercentenary of John Milton's birth, the friends who have assembled to honour his immortal memory. There are others—historians and critics of acknowledged eminence—who would far more fitly have occupied the place left vacant by our President's absence; and I rejoice to think that from a poet to whose voice no English ear could fail to listen a message of approval and sympathy has reached us which will be read to you presently. But there is one—no longer among us—to whom I think we would all have readily yielded precedence on an occasion like that which unites us this evening. By the monumental achievement of a long and arduous literary life David Masson has for ever linked his name with the memories which crowd upon us to-night—the memories, inseparably interwoven, of a great man and a great age.

However far, in commemorating the dawn of that 'bright effluence of bright essence' which symbolizes the divine gift of genius to man, we may fall short of giving expression to our sense of its significance, we are conscious that there is nothing alien to the spirit either of Milton's life or of Milton's art in the tribute which we pay—in the acknowledgement which we offer. To his soaring genius the thought of an undying fame and, I dare to say, the desire of it, were habitual; but the appeal which he made was not to the 'broad rumour' of a thoughtless world—neither the world to which he was unknown in the pure tranquillity of his youth, nor that which (with an exception here or there of thoughtful remembrance or lucid insight) hurried past the blind solitude of his declining years. Before the greatest of his works was completed he knew to what height his name would be raised unless the perversity of fate should 'damp his intended wing'; and, when his work was done, his imagination, speeding into futurity

with steady flight, would not have disdained that clear recognition of later ages which comes slowly to the greatest, and imperfectly even to them.

For think of him, if only for a moment, at two stages of his life separated from each other by the length of a human generation, and, as it may seem to a rapid survey, distinct as regards both intellectual purpose and personal aspiration. It was not, as an assumed analogy between the story of his life and that of the life of another of the world's greatest poets (Goethe) might seem to suggest, Milton's sojourn in Italy which separated as by a golden bar the earlier from the later half of his career; for the influence, enriching and refining, of classical antiquity had been strongest on him in the first thirty years of his life, and it lingered with him to the last, though under the control of a yet more potent influence. It was rather the anticipation of his return to England, where a new responsibility, as he believed, awaited him, which caused him as it were to recast the framework of his plan of life and work. But think of him, if you will, towards the close of the first and again towards the close of the second period of the race which it was his to run. Picture him first, if you like, in the spring of 1638, shortly before leaving the rural seclusion of Horton—

By slow Meander's margent green
And in the violet-embroidered vale—

to begin his travels beyond seas. He had crossed the threshold of maturity; behind him lay, far but not forgotten, the days of his unchildish childhood; the grave but not joyless experiences of his London home and school—the house of a father of whom the son could say that between them they held Phoebus Apollo 'not in part but in whole'—the school which cherished the ideals of its illustrious founder and drank in with sound learning a pure Christianity. Behind him, too, lay the seven years of his residence at Cambridge, who (the thought is unavoidable, and most perhaps to some of us whom some day she will fold to sleep in her motherly arms) might peradventure have kept him to her altogether. I feel sure that no small proportion of my hearers were, like myself, allowed to share in the solemnities—not less graceful than dignified—which, when last June was 'clothing in fresh attire' the roses in Christ's Gardens, Milton's college dedicated to the memory of her illustrious son; and we may well take it from the present Master of the College (I only wish he had been willing to tell you so himself to-night) that no transient tempests had obscured an appreciation of the eager but not uncritical student's deserts in the Society of Christ's; and that he might well have become one of

themselves, had not his resolute ambition, combined as it was with a rare mental balance, left the chance aside. 'There was,' says Dr. Peile, 'a great work before him; he must be thoroughly prepared.' What greater wealth, Milton exclaims, could his father have bestowed upon him than the opportunities for this ample preparation? And so it had come to pass that in the following five studious years at Horton he had grown into that fullness of promise which a sudden summons—'whether the Muse or Love' be the summoner, and to him both had called—can at once quicken into performance. 'My hasting days,' he had written, 'on being arrived to the age of twenty-three'—

fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.

Yet in this very year he had set his hand to *Arcades*, and three years later he had completed *Comus*, a poem in which the sublimity of his genius already shines forth with unrivalled splendour, while in his hands language passes into combinations—'musical, as is Apollo's lute.' It is at this time that I ask you to think of him, on the eve of his Italian journey, in the beauty of early manhood—with 'fair large front and eye sublime', and hyacinthine locks hanging in clusters 'round from his parted forelock'—riding over from Horton to Eton, there to seek the acquaintance and advice of the aged Provost, whose fame was in the mouths of many men, and in the palaces and along the waterways of many cities. Sir Henry Wotton, as Cowley afterwards wrote, was before long to go on 'his fourth' and last 'embassie'; 'the seignory and sovereignty of time' were over him, and death not far distant. But the old man's mind was clear, and his intellectual sympathies were active; and the praise of *Comus* which he sent to Milton after his visit—plainly confessing that he had never before seen anything resembling its delicacy of expression in our language—was, so far as we know, the first which had yet reached the poet from any—may I borrow the phraseology of a later age, for poets were criticised before reviews existed—from any authoritative quarter. The commendation was not rejected by Milton. Seven years afterwards he printed Sir Henry Wotton's generous letter in the first edition of his *Collected Poems*, and he referred to it with just pride nine years later in the *Defensio Secunda*.

The tribute of judicious praise which Milton had received with pleasure in the season when his 'inward ripeness' first revealed itself to him and others, came rarely to him in the still years which preceded his peaceful death. But he then needed no stimulus, and asked for no encouragement. He was not forgotten by the few, and

ready to hold converse with them on what he had achieved; but 'all passion was spent'; the labours which without that passion could not have been sustained were over, and the sightless eyes were gazing upon things invisible to mortal sight. It is true that in the year before his death he once more had recourse to the weapon of controversy which he had in earlier days dedicated to Liberty's defence; but its edge seemed blunted, and his Toleration pamphlet of 1673 was a compromise—though not a compromise with conviction—such as the waves of the nation's historical progress must in the end break down. How different had been the resolve—not the resolve of a moment or for a moment—with which already in Italy, and after his return from Italy, he had girded himself up for the struggle. Voices have not been wanting to charge him with obliquity of judgement in turning aside from divine poesy to barren controversy. Turning aside—barren controversy! He knew its barrenness, its frequent futility, and the weariness of soul which is the common meed of those who 'embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes'. 'But, were it the meanest under-service, if God by His secretary Conscience enjoin it, it were sad for me if I should draw back.' Yet, though he thus resolved, he had, as we know, a settled plan of campaign, as I may truly call it, for the struggle into which he had undertaken to enter. The Church, to which he had from his childhood been destined, by his own desires not less than by the wishes of his parents and friends, had his first thoughts as he went forth into the fray; but from her claims, as they presented themselves to him, he before long turned to respond to an even broader appeal—that of a cause for which many have lived and been ready to die, whose pen, like his, was their sword, yet who, nevertheless, may be reckoned among its self-sacrificing witnesses. To Liberty he came forward to testify under all the chief aspects of the national life; and, if a bitter sense of personal humiliation such as his proud soul could not bear led him to invert the due sequence of their treatment, the history of controversial literature contains no parallel to the onslaught, in a single year, on the *aes triplex* of social coercion—the marriage-laws; the stifling stupor of the English educational system which had long plodded on with hardly a glance upward towards great ideals; and that self-satisfied inquisitorial process by means of which Church and State had long sought, and were now once more seeking, to strangle before it was born into the light of day the reasonable expression of human thought. Freedom was here, as elsewhere, the cause for which Milton strove, and the love of which fired his zeal; but we at least shall not be likely to forget

his subsidiary argument that freedom is necessary to good letters, and that many a slavish tradition as to the dependence of authorship is contradicted by his pronouncement that the product of wits 'damped' by tyranny is 'flattery and fustian'.

But the height of the conflicts in which Milton shared had not been reached till, undismayed by the tragic events of which England, and his London in particular, had been the theatre, he assumed the whole responsibility of his political and religious principles, and became the public servant of the Commonwealth. No service of man is compatible with perfect intellectual or moral freedom; and, though clothed with the semblance of offensive warfare, his political writings became henceforth of their essence defensive, while considerations of policy, rather than the impulse of advocacy, now formed the primary motive of their eloquence, and even of their many deviations from good taste and its inseparable accompaniment, good feeling. Not for the sake of apology, but lest we should mistake his actual point of view, let us remember that the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was not put forth till the event to which it was designed to reconcile the national mind had exercised its profoundly disturbing effect; and, again, let us concede that the answer to the King's Book (so-called) was not so much an answer to a specious venture in spurious literature as a protest against a sentiment which was still a powerful political force.

In an intensified sense this note in Milton's later controversial writings seems characteristic of the most elaborate of them all, the *Defence on behalf of the English People*, in which, as the spokesman of both Government and nation, he had sought to make it clear that for the action of the one the other made itself in every way responsible. As a *tour de force*—I am not at this moment criticising it, but merely seeking to assign it the place which belongs to it in the story of its author's intellectual activity—it has rarely been surpassed; for Salmasius, whose *Defensio regia* it undertook to follow and refute, fundamentally, consecutively, thoroughly, was in his day the first among his peers, and his peers were those great scholars whose labours were regarded by their age as the acme of intellectual perfection. Again, I say, I am not upholding (how could I uphold) the methods of Milton's famous tract; I am not even insisting that, together with a closeness of argument which is Milton's own, we find here a fertility of rejoinder in which he certainly shows himself to all intents and purposes a scholar not less well equipped than his opponent, and, though deficient in humour, anything but deficient in wit. But I am reminding my hearers of

the service which Milton, now the half-hidden, half-forgotten denizen of Bunhill Fields, had some twenty years earlier undertaken, and consciously undertaken, to render to the English people—believing, as he not long afterwards wrote, that the truth, which had been defended by arms, should also be defended by reason—‘which is the best and the only legitimate means of defending it’. Nor can you forget the price he had paid for the privilege of rendering that service. The eyes which he had ‘overplied’ in the task which he had undertaken now began to fail hopelessly; and before he had finished the pleadings in the long-protracted suit he was totally blind.

‘Who best bear His mild yoke they serve Him best’, Milton afterwards wrote in a sonnet of which we would fain know the date; since blindness had settled down upon him for five long years or more before the resignation to the will of God, which speaks from those beautiful lines, had been succeeded by an anxious interval of hiding from the hand of man. Those years had been years of happiness; for happy are they who among the great trials of life and the small—and Milton had his full share of both—without abandoning faith or hope, find in themselves the remedies of which the use refreshes, purifies, ennobles. Probably few periods of Milton’s life had been fuller to him of such comfort as this than the four or five years in which, surrounded by men who were worthy of his converse, and with his loving second wife by his side, he had stood expectant of the realisation of national ideals destined soon to recede into a dim distance, while at times he was lifted, an earthly guest, into the heaven of heavens. The stern nursing of adversity had not yet weaned him from preoccupation with things of State. We may still turn over with a curious hand the state papers which he brought forth with him from the Latin Secretary’s Office—whether by accident or for some special purpose, it is useless to speculate. At any rate, we find him refusing, curtly enough, the suggestion of one of his most valued associates of these days that he shall use his knowledge and his wisdom ‘to compile a history of our troubles; for they seem rather to require oblivion than commemoration; nor have we so much need of a person to compose a history of our troubles as happily to settle them’. For the artist in him could not subdue his hand to whatever he worked in; and as he contemplated the perturbed condition into which public affairs were coming to fall around him, he could not but share the misgivings of wise men of other days in regarding the persons and actions presented to their eyes as petty, ignoble, ‘below all history.’ Among the great projects of his life there was now but one to which an impulse which had at last become

a purpose decided him to return; and we have good reason for concluding that it was some 'two years before the King came in'—a few months after the death of Milton's second wife—that he addressed himself to the work which he promised to complete 'if I have the power—and I shall have the power if God be gracious'.

But, before *Paradise Lost* was more than in part written, events had happened such as assuredly have never either before or since interfered between the greatest achievement of a poet's life and himself. Milton had been in hiding; he had been in prison; his controversial books had been burnt; and with his individual offences otherwise unpurged, he was free under the cover of the Act of Indemnity. Let us pass by other experiences—of the vengeance taken upon the quick and the dead whom he had most honoured among men. It was through a valley thus shadowed that Milton had passed into the sunlit nook of which I spoke, where whatever hazards—plague or fire—might betide, and whatever vexations life's dull round might bring, and though the past and its memories of honour and of shame were to be forgotten by him, his labours were to be divinely turned 'to peaceful end'.

Paradise Lost, I need hardly remind my hearers, was in no sense the fruit of Milton's old age, as which, if it is thought well, it is possible to describe *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. When *Paradise Lost* was finished, some seven years after the poet had set hand to its consecutive execution, he had not yet reached his sixtieth year; and, when he first resolved to concentrate his intellectual labours upon it, he had only recently relinquished a very varied literary activity. It is well known how the idea of composing a great poem, and then that of composing a great epic, on the particular subject of *Paradise Lost* had been present to Milton from his youth to his earlier and thence to his later manhood; and all the general conditions of the work he had long since in his frequent meditations determined. It was inevitable that a master of so many languages should have acquainted himself with any accessible work in which previous or contemporary authors had treated the same theme; and what they—Vondel more especially, of whom a further word immediately—had taught him, or (as I should prefer to say) the conviction which they had confirmed in him, was that it is both the function and the right of a poet to command his subject instead of allowing it to command him. The difficulty experienced by many worthy people in discriminating very clearly between what Milton found in the Bible and what he added of his own bears witness to the harmoniousness of his workmanship, for, as a matter of fact, it is only the last of the twelve

books of the poem and part of its predecessor which can, together with the luminously expansive *Paradise Regained*, be justly described as a paraphrastic reproduction of the Scriptural narrative. But the unity of impression conveyed by the longer poem also bears witness to what I take to be of yet greater moment—the harmoniousness of the design itself on which the poet builds up his work. Undoubtedly Milton's familiarity with the Bible was such that the whole range of ornament—and it is an extraordinary range—which lies in the beauty of biblical phraseology and the organ-tones of mere biblical nomenclature was at his command as it never has been in that of any writer before or since, from Cædmon to Klopstock, and is certainly never likely to be again in these post-Puritan ages. But what is much more is that the initiated poet's intimacy with his theme, recast as it is by his own original genius, is such as to suggest the same kind of inspiration—I say the same kind, not the same degree—as that which spoke to men through the writers of the sacred books themselves.

The present would in no case be a fit occasion on which to dwell further on a theme which, with one exception (that of the allegory of Sin and Death), is developed in full and natural accordance with its fundamental conception of guilt and the consequences of guilt. But there seems no reason for being overawed by the dictum of Goethe—whose admiration for the genius of Milton was strong and fervent, and who, I think, gave no indication of the sense in which his remark was to be taken—that the subject of *Paradise Lost*, though extremely magnificent, is inwardly unsound and hollow. There might have been some force in the application of the criticism to our other great English epics, where, as in a tapestry-covered antique hall, the eye is content with the magnificent pomp of the hangings; but in *Paradise Lost* the radiance proceeds from within. Still less need we be moved by the warning of an accomplished French critic, that the fundamental conceptions of *Paradise Lost*—in other words its theology—have become strange to us. Were *Paradise Lost* a dogmatic poem, there might be some force in the censure; but even Pope's sarcasm only directed itself to passages—I might almost say a passage—of the poem, and stands in designed contrast to a tribute to the boundless flight of Milton's genius which the conclusion of this very passage signally illustrates. Moreover, were the argument of *Paradise Lost* ten times a mythological fable, it is the poet's own matured conception of the ways of God to man, not a mere inherited belief, which his poem undertakes to justify.

But I ought not to allow myself to be tempted away from the plain purpose of this gathering. What is it—if I may presume to answer, if

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I may even presume to ask, such a question—what is it in the labours of which we have been speaking, in their consummation, that seems chiefly to move us, on the eve of the tercentenary of Milton's birth, to add to the wreaths which generation after generation, and century succeeding century, have laid upon his tomb—yet one other wreath, woven though it be

From the autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
In Vallombrosa . . .

In the first instance, the gift which was his in so marvellous a measure that to no other English writer at least, in prose or verse, it seems so distinctively to belong, the gift, too, which from the days of his youth onwards he had recognised as his, and which he had cultivated with religious assiduity, in sunshine and in shade, as the one talent which it is 'death to hide'—till in the evening of his days he returned it tenfold to the giver—how can we better define it than by the one word 'style'. 'Milton,' writes Matthew Arnold in one of the very happiest of his shorter essays, 'is our great artist in style, our one first-rate master in the grand style. . . . His importance to Englishmen, by virtue of this distinction of his, is incalculable. For the English artist in anything, if he is a true artist, the study of Milton has an indescribable attraction.' Wonderful indeed was the self-revelation of this gift to the child; wonderful the consciousness of it in the man, from which no movement of temper and no overclouding of judgement could lead him long astray; wonderful the power with which he could at the last don the whole radiant panoply and stand forth in it peerless among his peers in the House of Fame! His masters and teachers (who happily included one that 'honoured the Latin, but worshipped the English') had judged that whether aught was imposed by them upon their pupil, 'or betaken to of his own choice in English, or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live.' They had judged aright: the early poems had struck that note of 'perfection' which (as in the terminology of those self-secluded Christian communities to which Milton's thoughts so readily turned) implied the constant presence, the controlling influence, of the ideal. The gift, his most distinctive gift, had continued operative when he had, seemingly once for all, exchanged the chariot of Apollo for a vehicle to which something of the dust of earth is so ready to cling. The danger was near—apart from a different kind of temptation which for the moment I pass by—that the Latinists, from whose mastery a freer method of training had emancipated the English verse in which *Comus* and *Lycidas* were written, would,

though late, assert their predominance over the English prose-writer; but this predominance their influence never achieved, unless it were in his historical writings, where, as we have lately been reminded, he sought to acquire the sententious *Sallustiana brevitās*, which he was unable to imitate more closely than in the form of a certain grave quaintness. In the finest of all his earlier prose efforts, the *Areopagitica*, he sought to follow a model cast in a grander though simpler mould, seeking to adapt to English speech the intense but ample manner of Attic oratory. But, as was most clearly seen when the poetic Muse once more claimed him as her own, the genius of Milton's style was not one which could take its form from predecessors or rivals. Even the verbal texture of what he derived from other authors was transmuted in his hands; besides that in no respect was he more original and more unique than in his prosody—but the entire nature of the service which word or phrase came to render as it gained entrance into his poetry made it his own, and contributory to a total effect quite different than that which it had been in a former phase of its existence (if I may use such a phrase) intended to aid in producing. To test the truth of such a criticism, Milton's method of appropriation—for the term is not one from which a student of his writings should shrink—should be compared with Shakespeare's, and again with Shelley's; and it will then be seen how the originality of his own style, as fully manifest in *Paradise Lost* and its successors, was such that his whole method justified itself. It is almost a pity that the notorious eighteenth-century detector of what he thought he might with impunity set down as plagiarisms and thefts should have mixed up so large an amount of falsehood and forgery with his audacious charge, and thus, though Johnson had been rash enough to imply approval of the outrage, should have come forth from it, in Goldsmith's phrase, as a scourged, and it might be added as a self-confessed, impostor. For a search such as the unthinking well-informed love, but which nevertheless should not be evaded, whether its object be a Milton or a Vergil, was thus diverted from its real issues. Perhaps, as I have digressed thus far from the main tenor of this brief address, I may say a single word on the subject of another critical inquiry—conducted in the spirit and according to the laws of true scholarship, with regard to the actual indebtedness to a great contemporary dramatic poet incurred by Milton in many passages of his own matchless epic. There are beyond doubt many instances in which this indebtedness is not to be explained away, as there is no reason whatever why it should be ignored; but a recent consecutive re-reading of *Paradise Lost* side by side

with Vondel's *Lucifer* has intensified my conviction of the radical difference in conception as well as in execution between the two poems. It is in one of the most dramatically powerful parts of Milton's epic—in the passage descriptive of the 'great consult' in Pandemonium (a genuine palace of the Caroline age) among the 'infernal States'—the Dutch ring in that phrase who could mistake—under the dominant presidency of Satan—Moloch breathing flames of fire, time-serving Belial, and the rest, already in mid-revolt against a Power provoked by their own and their leader's pride—that the creation of another world inhabited by a new race of beings is announced as an opportunity for revenge. Far otherwise—and with far less convincing effect—Vondel represents the creation of Man as the cause of the great revolt in Heaven. I have no right to dwell on this difference without examining it more closely, and therefore I merely mention it as illustrating the rashness of those who fail to perceive that unlikeness in likeness is not the least striking among the proofs of originality.

But, to return, the real secret of Milton's style lies far deeper than any question as to the use made by him of 'pearl and gold'—whether classic or barbaric—showered on his receptive genius from the stores which lay open to him as a student. This secret, known to us all, was revealed by himself without the hesitancy of self-ignorance or self-distrust. The drawbacks of which he may have remained unconscious need not impede our assent to his interpretation of his own strength 'when insupportably his foot advanced'. Scant critical acumen is needed to show where in his prose (for even an approach to such instances is wholly isolated in his verse) he is guilty of stumbling against the silent protests of good taste and good feeling—where he swerves into irrelevant retort or rushes into ugly invective, and often alas! consciously matches himself only too successfully with the truculent gladiators of the decadent Renaissance. But even passages of this kind at times suffer a sea-change—turning as it were of a sudden into a thing of exquisite beauty and celestial loftiness—as, to take a supreme example, where, in the *Second Defence*, he rises from trivial retorts upon More's scurrilous comments on his supposed personal shortcomings to dwell on the single topic of his blindness. Then it is that, oblivious either of assault or of counter-assault, he bows down, in the solitude which was his inheritance, before the Divine Providence whose ways are not the ways of man, praying but to be 'perfected by feebleness and irradiated by obscurity'. Whence, we need hardly further ask ourselves, this power of self-recovery and rising as he returns into himself—whence, after he had in his latter days

summoned the heavenly Muse to be the visitant of his solitude, his power to detain her

nightly, or when morn

Purples the east—

and, as it seems to us, to speak thereafter no words but such as he owed to her inspiration?

Many years before Milton began to write *Paradise Lost* he had in a single sentence, which I should have liked to see written in characters of gold on the ceiling of the hall where we are assembled—itself long consecrate to literary pursuits and aspirations—unlocked the secret of the power supremely attested by that work and its sequel—‘Sion’s songs, to all true taste excelling.’ ‘He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.’ That elevation of soul, which when in his prose he is least himself, no pedantry of method, no adherence to the scholastic rule of responding by move upon move to every twist and turn of the adversary, no fierceness of partisanship and no fretfulness of temper, can enduringly hide—that elevation of soul which awes us in *Comus* and seems to waft to us ‘of pure now purer air’ from *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*—what else but this is the motive force of Milton’s genius and the chief formative element in the growth and consummation of his style?

We must proceed yet one step further, if you will take it with me instead of resenting so needless a solicitation, and seek to reach the source of that elevation of soul which I believe I have rightly described as Milton’s supreme poetic distinction. In his *Common-place Book*, where the association of ideas is from the nature of the case absolutely unforced, and comes home to us all the more naturally, he transcribes a passage from an old Latin homily headed *De viro bono*—as if he had been thinking of those *bonshommes* of the early Middle Ages, who led lives of blameless purity in the midst of corruption, and for the inheritors of whose traditions Milton had so ardent a sympathy in their martyrdom. ‘A good man,’ we read, ‘seems in a certain sense even to surpass the angels, in so far as, enwrapped in a weak and mortal body, he is engaged in a perpetual strife with the lusts of the flesh, yet aspires to lead a life resembling that of the celestials.’ Such an angelic nature—I do not use the word lightly—was that of Milton, like his own Samson Agonistes:

a person separate to God,

Design’d for great exploits—

silent in childhood under the sense of the call that was coming to him, obedient in manhood when that call came, but even when

darkness had gathered round the renewed solitude of his declining years holding high in his hand the flaming sword which divine behest had placed in it. You have, I know, traced that divine indignation against ungodliness and impurity—an indignation incapable of feeling those hesitations, or consenting to those compromises which the overpowering sense of immediate responsibility forced on even the great ruler whom Milton revered as ‘our chief of men’—you have traced that indignation through the vehement undercurrents which vary the exquisite beauty of his earlier verse, through the solemn reckoning which the poet of *Paradise Lost* seems to lay before us of the struggle of man’s free will against the seductions of passion and of sense, to the ‘sage’—that is, the ineffably wise and ineffably calm—rebuke, with which, in what I will not dare to designate as the sublimest passage of the sublime *Paradise Regained*, the pure lips of the Saviour dismiss the last and the strongest of human temptations—trust in the intellect of man. And you are aware how in the poet’s last inspired utterance, in the *Samson Agonistes*, the indignation flames forth once more, to be quieted at last in the assurance that

All is best, though we oft doubt
 What the unsearchable dispose
 Of Highest Wisdom brings about.

Even so. ‘Thou hast put gladness in my heart: since the time that their corn, and wine, and oil increased.’ The spirit of Milton’s life and moral being—a spirit which was as little concerned with the cropping of hair as with the burning of books—but a spirit in which there must be something that is austere, something that disengages itself from the mists on the level, something too that is at war with a ‘lubrique and adulterate age’—such is also the spirit of the writings on which rests his conscious claim to immortality. It overflows into his prose, it is the very essence of his poems. Thus, while criticism has tested its own powers by seeking to place itself in a right attitude towards the great poet’s works—and I think that from Dryden onwards no true critic has ever failed at least to see that in dealing with them he was handling the gold of our literature—the English people and the English-speaking world to whom the inheritance of these works has descended are at one in cherishing them with grateful reverence. But the memory of the giver is inseparable from the glory of the gift; and upon you who have met together in the eve of the day when, three hundred years ago, John Milton became part of the life of this great city and this great nation, I call to rise in attestation of the honour due to his venerated name.

MILTON AND MUSIC

By SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE



SUMMARY

MILTON AND MUSIC

BY SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE

IN accepting the kind invitation to speak on some aspect of Milton in connexion with music, I have thought it would be well within my own powers, and I hope not uninteresting to this distinguished audience, if I ventured to confine most of my remarks to a consideration of the opportunities for music which Milton has afforded in his beautiful Masque of *Comus*. I have for a long time been desirous of putting this *Comus* music before the world in a correct form—and this has never before been done—so I welcome this opportunity.

And as it is to a musician, Henry Lawes, that we most probably owe the suggestion of *Comus*—as we certainly owe to him its first publication—I venture to hope you will think I have chosen an appropriate subject.

We know, of course, Milton's appreciation of our splendid cathedral music, at least in his early days. His tribute to 'the pealing organ' and 'the full-voiced choir' is known to you all. But possibly you do not know how careful he was in this Masque to afford opportunities for the musician.

But before treating of *Comus* may I venture to say a few words on the musical training of the poet? This came through his father, who is proved by his compositions to have been an admirable musician. It is suggested that he may have been a chorister in Christ Church, Oxford, and there have acquired his Latin for his scrivenership and his music. Coming to London, we are told, he had an organ and other instruments in his house, and to the practice of music he devoted his leisure. Masson says 'his special faculty was music', and it is possible on his first coming to London he had taught or practised music professionally.

Six years after his settlement in London we find his name as one of the contributors to *The Triumphs of Oriana*, a collection of madrigals written in honour of Queen Elizabeth, and printed in 1601. Here we find his name alongside such honoured names as Orlando Gibbons, Wilbye, and other 'famous artists', as the editor styles them; and his madrigal is, I think, equal to most of those given in this great collection. There are six anthems by the elder Milton in the British

Museum, and one in the Library of Christ Church, Oxford, besides other compositions.

He contributed to other musical works in 1614, and again in 1621; and all this shows he was in the musical world of London, and his house was probably the resort of many of the best musicians of his time.

He is said to have instructed his distinguished son in music, and to have made him a skilful organist. When residing at Horton, in Buckinghamshire (1632-1635), Milton (the poet) frequently visited London to take lessons in music and mathematics. These music lessons were most probably given by Henry Lawes, who was noted as a master; but the earlier musical taste of our poet was no doubt guided by his father.

I have thought you would be interested to hear this fine madrigal by the elder Milton, and I will therefore make it the first musical illustration of to-night. It is the composition of a skilful contrapuntist—it has points of ‘imitation’ cleverly introduced, and as regards pleasant melody it is much more attractive than many of its companions in the collection. No doubt Milton often heard it sung when a boy. Perhaps I may venture to call attention to two lines of the words, which to me seem a little to suggest two lines that we find in Sabrina’s beautiful song, ‘By the rushy-fringed bank.’ In the madrigal we find—

With velvet steps on ground,
Which made nor print nor sound;

and in the *Comus* song we find—

Thus I set my printless feet
O’er the cowslip’s velvet head.

As the father was so gifted the love of music was very natural in the son. That Milton loved music, and thought it should have a high place in education, we learn from his ‘Scheme of an improved education for boys’, published in 1644. ‘The interests of their more severe lessons,’ he said, ‘might both with profit and delight be taken up in recreating and composing their troubled spirits with the solemn and divine harmonies of music . . . which, if wise men and prophets be not extremely out, have great power over dispositions and manners to smooth and make them gentle.’

We have seen that he journeyed to London to take lessons, and it is to Henry Lawes, who most probably taught him, that I must now turn for a moment.

Henry Lawes was one of three brothers distinguished in music. Henry and William were members of the Chapel Royal, and William seems also to have been a member of the choir of the Abbey, as also

was the other brother, John. I cannot find any certain proof that Henry was a member of our choir.

Lawes was a pupil of a musician who had studied in Italy, and who, having gone out as plain John Cooper, returned to his native country as Signor Giovanni Coperario. Lawes probably owed his tendency to write dramatic music rather than English Church music to this 'Italian' influence.

His connexion with *Comus* is well known, but the matter is so well told by Mr. Barclay Squire in his introduction to my edition of the music that I will venture to quote from it.

Milton and Lawes had already collaborated in a small Masque—that of *Arcades*, in which the Bridgewater children had acted. It was, therefore, natural he should be asked to arrange for the Masque at Ludlow, and no doubt he suggested that Milton should again provide a libretto.

There is a legend that an adventure which happened to Lord Bridgewater's children, who on a journey were benighted in a forest, and the Lady Alice for a time lost, suggested the subject of the Masque. There may be some foundation for this, but it is true that we find the principal incidents of the Masque in the *Old Wives' Tales* (1595) of George Peele, the Elizabethan poet.

There is in this play the sister lost in a wood, entrapped by a magician, and rescued by her brothers, all of which incidents are, of course, to be found in Milton's *Comus*.

You shall now hear the incidental music to *Comus* which Henry Lawes wrote for its first performance, together with other selections by William Lawes and contemporary composers, which I have suggested for the points in the Masque where music is desired.

Much as Milton wrote afterwards, he never wrote anything more beautiful or more perfect than *Comus*.



APPENDIX
VOCAL ILLUSTRATIONS

VOCAL ILLUSTRATIONS

*The Vocal Illustrations to Sir F. Bridge's Address were rendered by Members
of the Choir of Westminster Abbey.*

The Instrumental Music by the Grimson Quartet.

FAIR ORIAN

MADRIGAL FOR SIX VOICES

COMPOSED BY JOHN MILTON

From 'The Triumphs of Oriana' (1601)

Fair Orian in the morn	What lives these ladies led!
Before the day was born,	The roses blushing said,
With velvet steps on ground,	'Oh stay, thou shepherd's maid.'
Which made nor print nor sound,	And on a sudden all,
Would see her Nymphs abed.	They rose and heard her call.
Then sang those shepherds and nymphs of Diana:	
'Long live fair Oriana!'	

MUSIC TO THE MASQUE OF COMUS

No. 1. OVERTURE. $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} (a) \text{ Symphony} \\ (b) \text{ Almain} \end{array} \right\}$. . . William Lawes (d. 1645).

No. 2. SONG (*The Attendant Spirit*) . . . Henry Lawes (1595-1662).

From the Heavens now I fly
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purpled scarf can show,
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes.
(Where many a cherub soft reposes.)

No. 3. 'The King's Hunting Jigg' . . . Dr. John Bull (1563-1628).

No. 4. 'Sellinger's Round' Arranged by William Byrd (1538-1623).

No. 5. SONG (*The Lady*) . . . Henry Lawes.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen,
Within thy airy shell,
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That liketh thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where.
Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And hold a counterpoint to all Heaven's harmonies!
(And give resounding grace, &c.)

- No. 6. 'The Royal Consort.' *Andante* . . . William Lawes.
 No. 7. 'The Royal Consort.' *Allegro* . . . William Lawes.
 No. 8. SONG (*The Attendant Spirit*) . . . Henry Lawes.
 Sabrina fair,
 Listen where thou art sitting
 Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
 In twisted braids of lilies knitting
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
 Listen for dear honour's sake,
 Goddess of the silver lake,
 Listen and save!
 No. 9. SONG (*Sabrina*) . . . Adapted from Henry Lawes.
 By the rushy-fringed bank,
 Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
 My sliding chariot stays,
 Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
 Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
 That in the channel strays:
 Whilst from off the waters fleet
 Thus I set my printless feet
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
 That bends not as I tread.
 Gentle swain, at thy request
 I am here!
 No. 10. SARABAND . . . William Lawes.
 No. 11. { (a) 'Jigg' . . . William Lawes.
 (b) 'The Mitter Rant' . . . John Jenkins (1592-1678).
 No. 12. SONG (*The Attendant Spirit*) . . . Henry Lawes.
 Back, shepherds, back! Enough your play,
 Till next sunshine holiday,
 Here be, without duck or nod,
 Other trippings to be trod
 Of lighter toes, and such court guise
 As Mercury did first devise
 With the mincing Dryades
 On the lawns and on the leas.
 No. 13. MARCH. 'Lord Zouche's Maske' . Giles Farnaby (b. 1560).
 No. 14. SONG (*The Attendant Spirit*) . . . Henry Lawes.
 Noble Lord and Lady bright,
 I have brought ye new delight.
 Here behold so goodly grown
 Three fair branches of your own.
 Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
 Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
 And sent them here through hard assays
 With a crown of deathless praise,
 To triumph in victorious dance
 O'er sensual folly and intemperance.
 No. 15. SARABAND . . . William Lawes.
 No. 16. SONG (*The Attendant Spirit*) . . . Henry Lawes.
 Now my task is smoothly done:
 I can fly, or I can run
 Quickly to the green earth's end,
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,
 And from thence can soar as soon
 To the corners of the moon,
 Mortals, that would follow me,
 Love Virtue: she alone is free;
 She can teach ye how to climb
 Higher than the sphery-chime;
 Or if virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.





LIST OF PAPERS READ AT THE MILTON TERCENTENARY, 1908

Tercentenary of the Birth of John Milton, Oration by A. W. Ward,
Fellow of the Academy.

Milton as an Historian, by C. H. Firth, Fellow of the Academy.

Milton and Music, by Sir Frederick Bridge.

A Consideration of Macaulay's Comparison of Dante and Milton, by
W. J. Courthope, Fellow of the Academy.

Milton in the Eighteenth Century (1701-50), by Edward Dowden.

Samson Agonistes and the Hellenic Drama, by the late Sir R. C. Jebb,
O.M., Fellow of the Academy.

Milton as a Schoolboy and Schoolmaster, by A. F. Leach.

Milton's Fame on the Continent, by J. G. Robertson.

THE BRITISH ACADEMY



Milton as an Historian

By

C. H. Firth

Fellow of the Academy

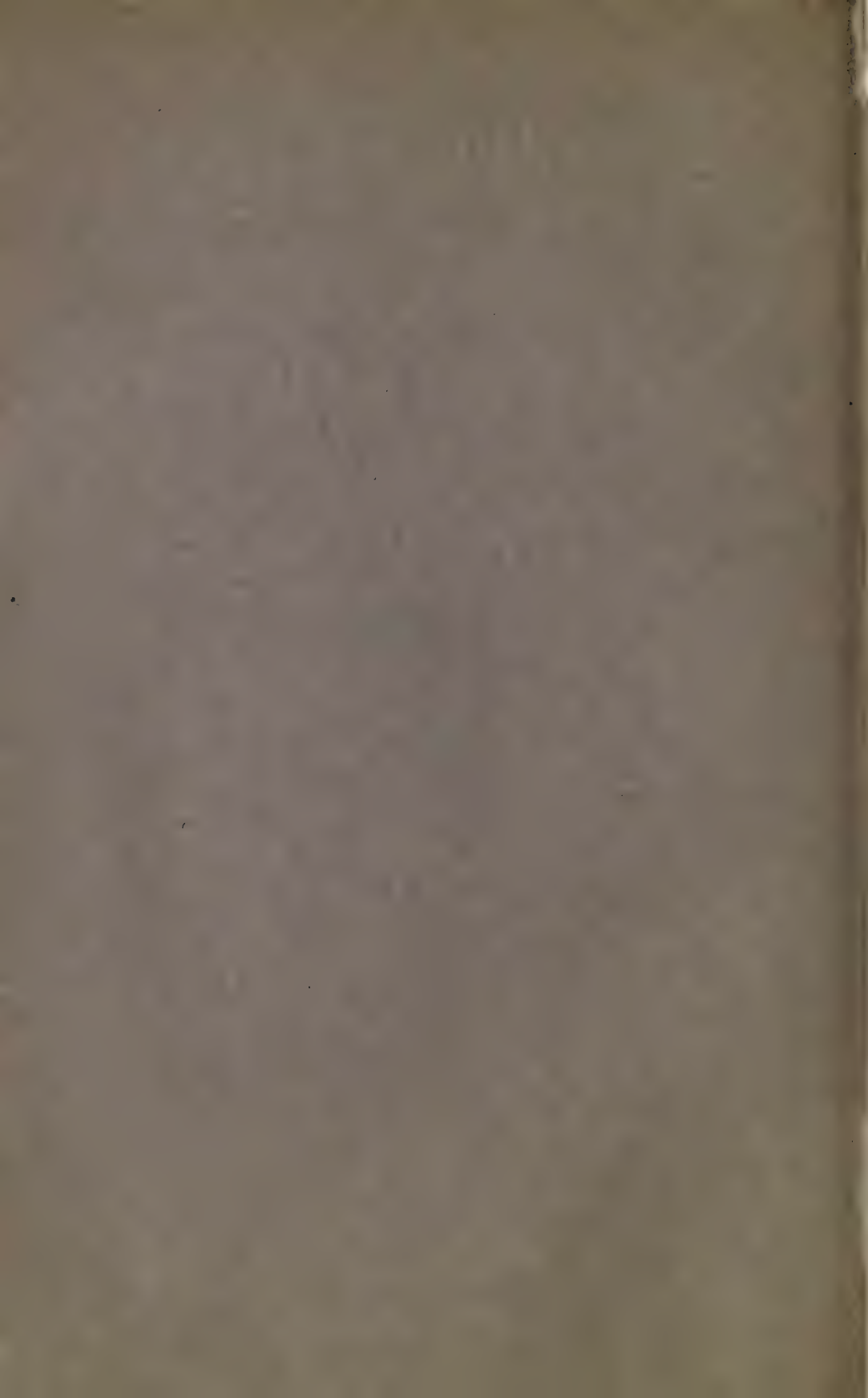
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MILTON AS AN HISTORIAN

By C. H. FIRTH

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Few people ever think of Milton as an historian. His interest in history is revealed to his readers by some similes in *Paradise Lost*,¹ and by those great passages in *Paradise Regained* embodying his conception of Roman rule and Athenian culture,² but his historical writings are of such slight importance compared to his pamphlets and his poetry, that they are almost forgotten. Yet Milton's *History of Britain* is worth studying. It elucidates both his political writings and his poems; like all that he wrote, it bears the impress of his character, and is, therefore, of some biographical value; finally, the book in itself is a work of learning and originality, worthy to be remembered in any account of the development of historical writing in England.

The full title of the book is 'The History of Britain, that part especially now called England, from the first traditional Beginning continued to the Norman Conquest. Collected out of the antientest and best authors thereof by John Milton.'³ It was published in 1670 by James Allestry, as a quarto volume of about 350 pages, costing five shillings. Eleven years later, in 1681, appeared a little pamphlet of twelve pages, entitled 'Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and the Assembly of Divines', which purported to be a passage of the *History* suppressed by the licenser when the book was published, and is usually inserted in modern editions at the beginning of the third part of the *History*.⁴

The early history of Britain had long occupied Milton's mind. We can trace the progress of his studies and the growth of his schemes up to the moment when he began to write the book which some four-and-twenty years later he gave to the world. The notes contained in his Common-place Book (written apparently in the interval between leaving Cambridge in 1632 and visiting Italy in 1638) prove that he had carefully read the Chronicles of Holinshed,

¹ *Paradise Lost*, i. 351-5; x. 306-11.

² *Paradise Regained*, Book iv.

³ See Masson's *Life of Milton*, vi. 642-8; Arber, *The Term Catalogues*, i. 277, 443.

⁴ Milton's *Prose Works*, ed. Mitford, iii. 94-101; Masson, vi. 906-12.

Stow, and Speed,¹ as well as several foreign historians.² It is clear that at that time the 'first traditional beginning' of British history attracted him most, and twice in the Latin verses written during the year 1639 he expressed his resolve to make these legends the subject of an epic poem. In the *Epitaphium Damonis* he declared that his future theme should be the coming of the Trojans, and the fortunes of the line of Brutus :

'Ipse ego Dardanias Rutupina per aequora puppes
Dicam, et Pandrasidos regnum vetus Inogeniae,
Brennumque Arviragumque duces, priscumque Belinum,
Et tandem Armoricos Britonum sub lege colonos ;
Tum gravidam Arturo fatali fraude Iögernen,
Mendaces vultus, assumptaque Gorlois arma,
Merlini dolus.'³

In the *Epistle to Mansus*, written a few months earlier, his chosen theme was to be the life of King Arthur :

'Si quando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
Arturumque etiam sub terris bella moventem,
Aut dicam invictae sociali foedere mensae
Magnanimos Heroas et (O modo spiritus adsit)
Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges.'⁴

Once more, in 1642, in his fourth pamphlet, he returned to his project. It was his purpose, he declared, to add to the fame of his native country by his writings. Hitherto its history had been meanly written. 'If the Athenians made their small deeds great and renowned by their eloquent writers, England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskilful handling of monks and mechanics.'⁵ To him it appeared that 'our own ancient stories' supplied fit matter for a poem, and he was deliberating over the

¹ *A Common-place Book of John Milton*, ed. by A. H. Horwood, pp. 9, 10, 22, 25, 27, 31 ; cf. Masson, *Life of Milton*, i. 303, 645, 736, vi. 790.

² In Milton's *Apology for Smectymnuus*, published in 1642, he speaks of his early historical reading : 'Some years I spent in stories of those Greek and Roman exploits, wherein I found many things both nobly done and worthily spoken.' He explains that when he came to the period of Constantine the Great the history of the Church proved intolerably repulsive. *Prose Works*, i. 269, 318.

³ *Epitaphium Damonis*, ll. 162-8 ; Masson, *Life of Milton*, ii. 84-94. Dated by Masson about October, 1639.

⁴ *Mansus*, ll. 80-4 ; Masson, *Life*, i. 524.

⁵ Milton is here referring to an observation made by Sallust : 'Atheniensium res gestae, sicuti ego aestumo, satis amplae magnificaeque fuere, verum aliquanto minores tamen quam fama feruntur, sed quia provenere ibi scriptorum magna ingenia, per terrarum orbem Atheniensium facta pro maxumis celebrantur.' —Sallust, *Catiline*, 8.

question 'what king or knight before the Conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero.'¹

One doubt, however, was still unresolved: whether it was best to adopt for his poem the epic or the dramatic form, and which of the two would be 'more doctrinal and exemplary' to his countrymen. For some time a tragedy with a chorus, after the antique model, had seemed the form best suited for his purpose, and about 1640 he jotted down on paper a long list of possible subjects, with brief notes as to the way of treating them. Of these subjects, numbering ninety-nine in all, sixty-one were scriptural and thirty-eight from British history, and it is noticeable that the subjects of the British tragedies were chosen not from the legendary period, but the times between the Roman conquest and the year 1066.²

None of these various schemes was realized in the form in which it was first conceived. The tragedy of 'Adam Unparadised' became ultimately the epic of *Paradise Lost*; the epic on Arthur and the 'British Tragedies' developed into the prose *History of Britain*.

We can trace with tolerable accuracy the progress of the *History of Britain*. Milton began to write it after the conclusion of the series of pamphlets on divorce (March 1645), and after the close of the first Civil War (June 1646). It is probable that by the end of 1647 he had completed the first and second books, since the original introduction to the third book must have been written, judging from its tone, about the close of 1647 or the beginning of 1648. It is certain, on Milton's own evidence, that by March 1649, when he became Secretary to the Council of State, he had finished four out of the six books, and had brought the story down to the union of England under the rule of Egbert. He tells us that he then intended to relate the history of England from its first beginnings to his own day.³ But this intention was never fulfilled. At some period after 1649 Milton wrote the fifth and the sixth books, which contain the story of the Danish invasions and the Norman conquest, but he proceeded no further. His blindness proved no doubt too great an obstacle.⁴

¹ Masson, ii. 361, 385; *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty. Prose Works*, i. 145.

² *Ibid.*, 106; Aldis Wright, pp. 35, 36.

³ He says: 'ad historiam gentis, ab ultima origine repetitam, ad haec usque tempora, si possem, perpetuo filo deducendam, me converti.' *Defensio Secunda*, Mitford's ed. of Milton's *Prose Works*, iv. 293.

⁴ Milton probably resumed the *History of Britain* about the end of 1655, since he published his *Pro Se Defensio* in August 1655, and, having completed the Salmasius controversy, had time at his disposal. 'Being now quiet from State adversaries and public contests,' says Phillips, 'he had leisure again for his own studies and private designs.' In March 1657 he was inquiring about the cost of

The purpose which Milton set before himself when he began to write is clearly explained in the exordium to his *History*:

‘The beginning of nations, those excepted of whom sacred books have spoken, is to this day unknown. Nor only the beginning, but the deeds of many succeeding ages, yea, periods of ages, either wholly unknown, or obscured and blemished with fables. . . . Of British affairs, from the first peopling of the island to the coming of Julius Caesar, nothing certain, either by tradition, history, or ancient fame, hath hitherto been left us. That which we have of oldest seeming, hath by the greater part of judicious antiquaries been long rejected for a modern fable.

‘Nevertheless, there being others, besides the first supposed author, men not unread, nor unlearned in antiquity, who admit that for approved story which the former explode for fiction; and seeing that oftentimes relations heretofore accounted fabulous have been after found to contain in them many footsteps and reliques of something true, as what we read in poets of the flood, and giants little believed, till undoubted witnesses taught us that all was not feigned; I have therefore determined to bestow the telling over even of these reputed tales; be it for nothing else but in favour of our English poets and rhetoricians, who by their art will know how to use them judiciously.

‘. . . I intend not with controversies and quotations to delay or interrupt the smooth course of history; much less to argue and debate long who were the first inhabitants, with what probabilities, what authorities each opinion hath been upheld; but shall endeavour that which hitherto hath been needed most, with plain and lightsome brevity, to relate well and orderly things worth the noting, so as may best instruct and benefit them that read.’¹

It is evident that for the moment the truth of the facts related was less important in Milton’s eyes than the manner in which they were related. History meant to him, when he began, merely the art of story-telling. As he hinted, the early history of England had been lengthily and tediously told in the ponderous volumes of his predecessors. In Holinshed’s *Chronicle* 202 pages are required to reach the battle of Hastings, out of which 22 pages are devoted to the legendary period before the landing of Caesar. Speed expends editions of Byzantine historians, which is evidence that his mind was once more turned to historical studies (see Masson, *Life of Milton*, v. 225, 284).

There is also another piece of evidence. On pp. 273, 287 of his *History* he refers to ‘the Chronicle attributed to John Brompton, a Yorkshire Abbot, but rather of some nameless author living under Edward III or later’. This chronicle was first published in Twysden’s *Decem Scriptores* in 1652 as ‘Chronicon Johannis Brompton Abbatis Jorvalensis’. Milton no doubt used the edition of Simeon of Durham included in the same collection. He often refers to that author in the two latter books of the *History* and towards the end of Book IV.

¹ *History of Britain*, ed. 1670, pp. 1–3.

411 pages and 41 pages respectively on those two divisions of his subject.¹ Milton, on the other hand, contrives to cover the legendary period in 30 pages, and to complete his whole story in 308 pages, and these are quarto pages containing not much more than three hundred words, while the pages of Holinshed and Speed are folios printed in double columns. One page of Holinshed contains as many words as four pages of Milton, and in lightness of touch, as well as brevity, Milton as a story-teller exceeds either Holinshed, Speed, or Stow.

The legends which formed the staple of early British history had already been told and retold by many Elizabethan and Jacobean poets. Spenser in the second book of the *Faerie Queene* had versified in some six hundred lines the story of the landing of Brutus and the fortunes of his descendants up to Uther Pendragon.² Milton quotes a stanza from his version.³ Drayton interspersed the thirty 'Songs' of his *Polyolbion*, wherever a legend could be localized, with narratives of British or Saxon monarchs which hill tells to hill and river certifies to river. In the first song of all the Dart claims the royalty of all the streams in the West because Brutus landed at her mouth, 'which now the envious world doth slander as a dream.'⁴ It is to Drayton and Spenser that Milton alludes when he recites his story of the wrestling match between Corineus and the giant Goemagog, terming it 'a grand fable though dignified by our best poets'.⁵

Minor poets, too, had sought the same inexhaustible storehouse. Higgins, in his additions to *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), Warner in *Albion's England* (1586), Heywood in *Troja Britannica* (1609), and Slatyer in *Palaeo-Albion* (1621), all had found material for their art in the mythical history of Britain. Nor had the dramatists, from the author of *Gorboduc* to the author of *Lear* and *Cymbeline*, been behindhand in employing plots from the same source in tragedies or chronicle plays. Whether Milton believed these stories or not, their familiarity and their attractiveness made it impossible for him to pass them over in silence.

¹ The computation is based on the edition of Holinshed of 1586, and the 1632 edition of Speed. Milton, as his Common-place Book shows, used this edition of Holinshed and the 1631 edition of Stow.

² Book II, canto x.

³ *Ibid.*, x, l. 212; *History of Britain*, p. 16.

⁴ *Polyolbion*, ed. 1613, p. 8. Drayton is a convinced believer in the Brutus legend. Selden, in the notes, argues for it 'as an advocate for the Muse', but not 'if alleged for my own opinion'. See pp. 17, 93, 162, and the address 'from the author of the Illustrations' prefixed.

⁵ *History of Britain*, p. 13; *Faerie Queene*, II. x. 92; *Polyolbion*, p. 12.

Moreover, they had a great attraction for Milton himself, even if his judgement rejected them as fictitious. In *Comus* he had already utilized the story of Sabrina, the 'virgin daughter of Locrine', who gave her name to the Severn, and he now told it once more in prose.¹ The space devoted in the *History of Britain* to the story of Lear and Cordelia is probably a tribute to Shakespeare, but the two pages devoted to kings Brennus and Belinus must be explained by the fact that they were to have been personages in the intended epic.²

It is not only by his treatment of the mythical period of English history that Milton's interest in the legendary and anecdotic side of history is revealed. It appears in the later books as well as the earlier, and the introduction of certain episodes or the space devoted to them may often be explained by their inclusion in the list of suggested subjects for his 'British Tragedies'. The story of Queen Eadburga, the vision of King Edwin, Athelstan's murder of his brother and his repentance, are cases in point.³ But the most remarkable instance is the narrative of King Edgar's marriage with Elfrida, and of another love adventure of that king's which Milton himself styles 'fitter for a novel than a history'.⁴ 'Edgar slaying Ethelwold for false play in wooing' had once seemed a good plot for a tragedy. 'Wherein,' noted Milton, 'may be set out his pride and lust, which he thought to cloak by favouring monks and building monasteries; also the disposition of woman in Elfrida towards her husband.'⁵

Another episode treated at somewhat disproportionate length is that of the murder of Aelfred, the second son of Ethelred the Unready, which some authorities attributed to the treachery of Earl Godwin. The explanation of the space given to the story, and of the elaboration with which the statements of conflicting authors about it are set forth, appears to be that Milton once intended to make it the starting-point of a classical tragedy. The first scene of the tragedy of Harold, he had noted, 'may begin with the ghost of Alfred . . . slain in cruel manner by Godwin, Harold's father, his mother and brother dissuading him.'⁶

Here and elsewhere throughout the *History of Britain* the influence of Holinshed's *Chronicle* is plainly perceptible. Alike in the anecdotes inserted and the anecdotes omitted, Milton usually

¹ *Comus*, ll. 824-937; *History of Britain*, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 22.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 224, 289.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁵ Masson, *Life of Milton*, ii. 114.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 114; *History of Britain*, p. 274.

follows in the track of Holinshed (or rather of Abraham Fleming, who wrote that part of Holinshed's compilation). For instance, under the reign of Edward the Confessor Milton relates the stories of the divine judgement upon Godwin, the soldierly death of Siward, and the prophetic vision of Edward the Confessor;¹ all these are to be found in Holinshed, but none of them in Speed or Stow. Similarly, Milton omits the story of Alfred and the cakes, which is omitted by Holinshed though it is told both by Stow and Speed. In the first book of the *History of Britain* the author's obligations to Holinshed are still more evident, nor is it by a mere coincidence that the first sentence of one is an echo of the second sentence in the other. 'The beginning of nations, those excepted of whom sacred books have spoken, is to this day unknown,' writes Milton. 'The original in manner of all nations is doubtful,' wrote the chronicler, 'and even the same for the most part fabulous, that always excepted, which we find in the Holy Scriptures.'²

On the other hand, Milton's was too vigorous and too independent a mind to adopt implicitly the conclusions of any previous writer. He had read Stow and Speed as well as Holinshed, and seems from his notes to have compared their narratives. At a later stage he read what original authorities he could obtain for the period from the coming of the Romans to the Norman Conquest, and tested the statements of the chroniclers by their aid. Many statements and theories which the chroniclers had accepted he dismissed as unfounded or improbable when he came to write.

Holinshed (or rather Abraham Fleming) begins the history of Britain, about the time of the flood, with the rule of Samothés, the sixth son of Japhet, and his sons, and the subjugation of the island about three hundred years later by the giant Albion, the son of Neptune. Milton, with Stow and Speed, rejects this story, calling it 'an outlandish figment', and condemning 'those of our own writers who thought they had done nothing unless with all circumstance they tell us when and who first set foot upon this island.'³

Holinshed and Stow both accept with implicit faith the Brutus legend. The latter intercalates in his narrative 'A briefe Prooofe of Brute', showing how many learned men affirm this history, and denounces Polydore Vergil for denying it. This man, he complains, 'with one dash of a pen cashiereth three score princes with all their

¹ *History of Britain*, pp. 290, 291, 298.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1. Holinshed, ed. 1587; Bk. I, p. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

histories and historians; yea, and some ancient laws also.'¹ On the other hand, Speed states, with convincing clearness and great elaboration, the arguments against the legend. 'As France,' he concludes, 'hath cast off their Francio king Priamus his son, Scotland their Scotia king Pharoës' daughter, Denmark their Danus, Ireland their Hiberus, and other countries their demigods, so let Britaines likewise with them disclaim their Brute.'²

Milton endeavours to hold the balance between absolute credulity and complete rejection. He will not follow Speed the whole way:

'Of Brutus and his line with the whole progeny of kings, to the entrance of Julius Caesar, we cannot so easily be discharged; descents of ancestry, long continued, laws and exploits not seeming to be borrowed or devised, which on the common belief have wrought no small impression; defended by many, denied utterly by few. For what though Brutus and the whole Trojan pretence were yielded up . . . yet those old and inborn names of successive kings, never any to have been real persons, or done in their lives at least some part of what so long hath been remembered, cannot be thought without too strict an incredulity.

'For these, and those causes above mentioned, that which hath received approbation from many, I have chosen not to omit. Certain or uncertain, be that upon the credit of those whom I must follow; so far as keeps aloof from impossible and absurd, attested by ancient writers from books more ancient, I refuse not, as the due and proper subject of story.'³

Another series of legends clustered round the introduction of Christianity into Britain. It was said that Simon Zelotes or Joseph of Arimathaea had preached Christianity in this country during the reign of Nero, and that about the year 177 when Lucius was king of Britain the whole island accepted the faith. A letter of Pope Eleutherius to the king was quoted in support of the facts; Lucius was canonized as the first British saint, and it became the accepted belief of English historians that the British nation was the first to make public profession of Christianity. Holinshed, Stow, and even the critical Speed, with some differences as to the details, all accepted these stories. Milton relates them, but he does so with obvious scepticism, and concludes: 'Of these matters, variously written and believed, ecclesiastic historians can best determine: as the best of them do, with little credit given to such uncertain relations.'⁴

¹ Stow's *Chronicle*, ed. 1631, p. 6 and preface.

² Speed, pp. 14-20.

³ *History of Britain*, p. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80; Holinshed, i. 37, 51; Speed, pp. 73-81, 103; Stow, p. 38. Fuller, *Church History*, ed. 1655, p. 9. Milton was indifferent to this claim,

Milton shows the same scepticism about the popular belief that Constantine the Great was of British descent. 'There goes a fame,' he says, 'and that seconded by most of our own historians, though not those the ancientest, that Constantine was born in this island, his mother Helena the daughter of Coilus, a British prince.' He proceeds to point out a few improbabilities, and to summarize the evidence of the Roman authorities against it. Here again he is more difficult to satisfy than Speed, who accepts the tradition, quoting, in answer to unbelievers, the opinion of 'Time's chief secretary, the learned Camden' in its favour.¹

Milton's treatment of the Arthurian legend is a still more interesting example of the progress of scepticism. The three chroniclers who were the standard historians of Milton's time all doubted the details of the legend, but believed that Arthur was a real king who gained genuine victories. 'Of this Arthur,' says Holinshed's *Chronicle*, 'many things are written beyond credit, for that there is no ancient author of authority that confirmeth the same; but surely as may be thought he was some worthy man, and by all likelihood a great enemy to the Saxons, by reason whereof the Welshmen, which are the very Britons indeed, have him in famous remembrance.' Then at great length he relates the legendary life and exploits of the hero.²

Stow is briefer, but adopts much the same position. 'Of this Arthur there be many fabulous reports, but certain he was (saith William of Malmesbury) a prince more worthy to have advancement by true histories than false fables, being the only prop and upholder of his country.' He supports the truth of the story by identifying the sites of Mon Badonicus and the Castle of Camelot, and describing the remains found there.³ The critical Speed quotes Malmesbury

holding it a greater glory that Wicliffe, the beginner of the Reformation, was an Englishman: 'England having had this grace and honour from God to be the first that should set up a standard for the recovery of lost truth, and blow the first evangelic trumpet to the nations.' *Of Reformation, Prose Works*, i. 5. Archbishop Parker firmly believed in the Lucius legend, and also did Cardinal Pole; Strype's *Parker*, i. 139, 467; iii. 247.

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 89; Speed, p. 156; Holinshed, pp. 62, 63. Gibbon summarizes the question in a sentence: 'This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine, was invented in the darkness of the monasteries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth and the writers of the twelfth century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous history of England compiled by Mr. Carte' (vol. i, p. 147).—*Decline and Fall*, ed. Bury, p. 397.

² Holinshed, i. 90-3.

³ Stow, pp. 53-5.

too, and condemns Geoffrey of Monmouth for discrediting the truth about Arthur by his toys and tales. 'Of his person,' he concludes, 'we make no doubt, though his acts have been written with too lavish a pen.'¹

Milton is much more thoroughgoing. All that happened about that time is doubtful. 'The age whereof we now write hath had the ill hap more than any since the first fabulous times, to be surcharged with all the idle fancies of posterity.' He introduces Arthur by describing him as a British leader, 'more renowned in songs and romances than true stories.' With real insight he dismisses at once the mediaeval fictions and examines the account of Nennius as the only evidence of any real value :

'Who Arthur was, and whether ever any such reigned in Britain, hath been doubted heretofore, and may again with good reason. For the monk of Malmesbury and others, whose credit hath swayed most with the learned sort, we may well perceive to have known no more of this Arthur five hundred years past, nor of his doings, than we now living; and what they had to say, transcribed out of Nennius, a very trivial writer yet extant, which hath already been related; or out of a British book, the same which he of Monmouth set forth, utterly unknown to the world, till more than six hundred years after the days of Arthur, of whom (as Sigebert in his chronicle confesses) all other histories were silent, both foreign and domestic, except only that fabulous book. Others of later time have sought to assert him by old legends and cathedral regests. But he who can accept of legends for good story, may quickly swell a volume with trash, and had need be furnished with two only necessities, leisure and belief; whether it be the writer, or he that shall read.'²

'As to Arthur,' he continues, 'no less is in doubt who was his father,' and then proceeds to demolish Uther Pendragon: 'And as we doubted of his parentage, so may we also of his puissance; for whether that victory at Badon-hill were his or no is uncertain.' All he will concede is that, 'whether by Arthur won, or whensoever,' that battle 'seems indeed to have given a most undoubted and important blow to the Saxons and to have stopped their proceedings for a good while after.'³

When we compare Milton's treatment of this with that of Holinshed, Stow, and Speed, his superiority is evident. Alter the phraseology, and he might have been writing in the nineteenth rather than the seventeenth century. For his conclusions are roughly those

¹ Speed, p. 271.

² *History of Britain*, p. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 122, 124.

of modern scholars, and his reasoning practically that of a scientific historian.¹

Here, as in many other places, Milton's *History* helps to explain his poetry. One of the reasons for the abandonment of the intended epic on the story of Arthur was that his studies had convinced him there was no more truth in it than there was in the story of Brutus. When he referred later to the Arthurian legends he was careful to emphasize their fictitious character. He speaks of

‘What resounds
In fable or romance of Uther’s son,
Begirt with British and Armoric knights’:

or of

‘Ladies that seemed
Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
Of faery damsels met in forest wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.’²

It was not in these legends of ‘fabled knights’ and ‘battles feigned’ that he could find the substance of his ‘heroic song’,³ nor was it through them that he could convey the ethical teaching which it was the office of the poet to give.

As we have already pointed out, Milton's *History* is not entirely a compilation from the standard historians of his day, but is also based upon a considerable study of the original sources accessible when he wrote. He begins by endeavouring to form an opinion of the value of the authorities for each particular period taken collectively, and supplements this by incidental estimates of individual authors.

For the legends of the prae-Roman period he says at the outset: ‘The principal author is well known to be Geoffrey of Monmouth; what he was and whence his authority, who in his age or before him have delivered the same matter, and such like general discourses, will better stand in a treatise by themselves.’⁴ The treatise was never written, but we can gather Milton's opinion of Geoffrey's credibility from his rejection of his statements, and from disparaging references to his fables and untruths.⁵ Authentic history, Milton declares at the close of his first book, begins with the coming of the Romans.

¹ Hodgkin, *Political History of England*, i. 104–5, 107; Ramsay, *Foundations of England*, i. 124–5, 135.

² *Paradise Lost*, i. 579; *Paradise Regained*, ii. 357.

³ *Paradise Lost*, ix. 27–40.

⁴ *History of Britain*, p. 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 28, 47, 54, 79, 84, 103, 144.

‘By this time, like one who had set out on his way by night, and travelled through a region of smooth or idle dreams, our history now arrives on the confines where daylight and truth meet us with a clear dawn, representing to our view, though at a far distance, true colours and shapes. For albeit Caesar, whose authority we are now first to follow, wanted not who taxed him of misrepresenting in his Commentaries, yea, in his Civil War against Pompey, much more, may we think, in the British affairs, of whose little skill in writing he did not easily hope to be contradicted; yet now in such variety of good authors, we hardly can miss, from one hand or other, to be sufficiently informed, as of things past so long ago.’¹

‘... The only authors we have of British matters while the power of Rome reached hither’ are Roman authors ‘who in the Latin tongue have laid together as much and perhaps more than was required to a history of Britain.’ The story they tell is ‘a story of much truth’, and for the first hundred years and more it may be ‘collected without much labour’. For the most part ‘little seems to be required above transcription’, although something may be added by diligence and explained by the arrangement of the facts. Towards the end of the period, however, ‘the Roman empire declining apace, good historians growing scarce or lost, have left us little but fragments for many years ensuing.’²

When the Roman empire fell, darkness settled down again; learning and history, and even language itself, decayed with it:

‘Henceforth we are to steer by another sort of authors; near enough to the things they write, as in their own country, if that would serve; in time not much belated, some of equal age; in expression barbarous, and to say how judicious, I suspend awhile: this we must expect; in civil matters to find them dubious relaters, and still to the best advantage of what they term the Holy Church, meaning indeed themselves: in most other matters of religion, blind, astonished, and struck with superstition as with a planet; in one word, Monks. Yet these guides, where can be had no better, must be followed; in gross, it may be true enough; in circumstances each man, as his judgement gives him, may reserve his faith, or bestow it.’³

One of these monks was Bede, the chief authority, says Milton, for the period from the coming of the Saxons to 731, but even he could not make it intelligible:

‘Beda surceased to write. Out of whom chiefly has been gathered, since the Saxon’s arrival, such as hath been delivered, a scattered story picked out here and there, with some trouble and tedious work, from among his many legends of visions and miracles; toward the

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 33, 84.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

latter end so bare of civil matters, as what can be thence collected may seem a calendar rather than a history, taken up for the most part with succession of kings, and a computation of years, yet those hard to be reconciled with the Saxon annals. Their actions we read of were most commonly wars, but for what cause waged, or by what councils carried on, no care was had to let us know; whereby their strength and violence we understand, of their wisdom, reason, or justice, little or nothing, the rest superstition and monastical affectation; kings one after another leaving their kingly charge, to run their heads fondly into a monk's cowl; which leaves us uncertain whether Beda was wanting to his matter, or his matter to him.¹

Yet whatever Bede's defects might be he was a better guide than the authors on whom it was necessary to depend for the following period:

'From hence to the Danish invasion it will be worse with us, destitute of Beda. Left only to obscure and blockish chronicles; whom Malmesbury, and Huntingdon (for neither they nor we had better authors of those times), ambitious to adorn the history, make no scruple oftentimes, I doubt, to interline with conjectures and surmises of their own; them rather than imitate, I shall choose to represent the truth naked, though as lean as a plain journal. Yet William of Malmesbury must be acknowledged, both for style and judgement, to be by far the best writer of them all; but what labour is to be endured turning over volumes of rubbish in the rest, Florence of Worcester, Huntingdon, Simeon of Durham, Hoveden, Matthew of Westminster, and many others of obscurer note, with all their monachisms, is a penance to think. Yet these are our only registers, transcribers one after another for the most part, and sometimes worthy enough of the things they register. This travail, rather than not to know at once what may be known of our ancient story, sifted from fables and impertinences, I voluntarily undergo; and to save others, if they please, the like displeasing labour.'²

At intervals during the later part of his narrative Milton characterizes or criticizes particular authors more fully. Malmesbury, though the best, had other defects besides those mentioned. 'He refused not the authority of ballads for want of better' and inserted stories he confessed 'to be sung in old songs not read in warrantable authors'.³ Besides, he was too much biased in favour of monks and kings who loved monks, and against the secular clergy. Henry of Huntingdon was not to be trusted unless he was confirmed by some other authority: 'little credit is to be placed in Huntingdon single.' He was too imaginative. 'His manner is to comment upon the Annal text' (that is, the *Saxon Chronicle*) and to add fictitious details of the

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 172.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 229.

events recorded 'describing the manner of those battles and encounters, which they who compare and can judge of books may be confident he never found in any current author whom he had to follow'.¹

Of the value of the 'Saxon Annals', as Milton terms the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, he has a very just conception. 'These I take . . . to be the chief foundation of our story, the ground and basis upon which the monks in later times gloss and comment at their pleasure.' But to understand them and make out the real significance of the Annals was a very difficult task. Sometimes their record of events was 'without coherence of sense or story'. Alfred's wars with the Danes 'are set down so perplexedly by the Saxon annalist, ill gifted with utterance, as with much ado can be understood sometimes what is spoken of whether meant of the Danes or of the Saxons'. For instance, it is impossible to say who won the battle of Merton, 'so darkly do the Saxon Annals deliver their meaning with more than wonted infancy.' Poetical passages, such as the ballads on the battles of Brunanburh and Maldon completely baffled and somewhat enraged Milton. Of the former he says: 'The Saxon annalist, wont to be sober and succinct, whether the same or another writer, now labouring under the weight of his argument, and overcharged, runs on a sudden into such extravagant fancies and metaphors as bear him quite beside the scope of being understood. . . . I shall only sum up what of him I can attain in usual language.'²

Milton endeavoured to supplement the scantiness of the English sources by the help of foreign historians, but got little satisfaction from them. He searched the *Rerum Danicarum Historia* of J. J. Pontanus for information about the Danish invasion, but found nothing of any value. As to the ninth century 'of all these terrible landings and devastations by the Danes . . . or of their leaders whether kings, dukes, or earls, the Danish history of best credit saith nothing; so little wit or conscience they had to leave any memory of their brutish rather than manly actions'. As to the tenth century: 'The Danish history, at least their latest and diligentest historian, as neither from the first landing of the Danes, in the reign of West Saxon Brithric, so now again contributed nothing; busied more than enough to make out the bare names and successors of their uncertain kings, and their small actions at home; unless out of him I should transcribe what he takes, and I better may, from our own annals.'³

¹ *History of Britain*, pp. 122, 175, 211.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 211, 212, 225.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 192, 244.

When Milton turned to the Scottish historians for facts about the invasion of the Picts and Scots the result was still more disappointing, for he found nothing but pure fiction. George Buchanan, he complains, in his *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, 'departs not much from the fables of his predecessor Boethius' (i. e. Hector Boece); 'with no less exactness of particular circumstances he takes upon him to relate all those tumultuary inroads of the Scots and Picts into Britain, as if they had but yesterday happened, their order of battle, manner of fight, number of slain, articles of peace, things whereof Gildas and Beda are utterly silent, authors to whom the Scotch writers have none to cite comparable in antiquity; no more therefore to be believed for bare assertions, however quaintly dressed, than our Geoffrey of Monmouth, when he varies most from authentic story. But either the inbred vanity of some, in that respect unworthily called historians, or the fond zeal of praising their nations above truth, hath so far transported them, that where they find nothing faithfully to relate, they fall confidently to invent what they think may either best set off their history, or magnify their country.' It was amusing when 'our neighbour historian' gravely reprehended Geoffrey of Monmouth and others 'for fabling in the deeds of Arthur; yet what he writes thereof himself as of better credit, shows not whence he had but from those fables which he seems content to believe in part on condition that the Scots and Picts may be thought to have assisted Arthur in all his wars and achievements; whereof appears as little ground by credible story as of that which he most counts for fabulous'.¹

Another modern author of whom Milton made constant use was Camden. Whenever the locality of a battle had to be fixed, or the modern name of a place given, it was naturally to Camden's *Britannia* that he turned. The spot where Caesar landed, the ford by which he crossed the Thames, the site of the camp of Caractacus, the position of the Roman wall, and other topographical facts mentioned were all derived from the same source. These questions of identification did not interest Milton much; he contented himself with briefly giving the necessary minimum of information on such points without interrupting the narrative by discussions. If they could not be identified he preferred to omit them. He did not care, he said, 'to wrinkle the smoothness of history with the rugged names of places unknown better harped at in Camden and other chorographers'.²

¹ *History of Britain*, pp. 103, 126, 185.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 45, 56, 77, 78, 83, 160, 178. Milton also refers to Spelman's *Concilia*, p. 143.

Milton's method of combining and comparing the statements he found in the various authorities he used deserves notice. At the outset he had declared 'I intend not with controversies and quotations to interrupt the smooth course of history.'¹ But these words referred, as the context shows and his later practice proves, merely to the legendary period covered in the first book. He declined to waste labour 'in computing or collating years and chronologies' when he was dealing with the reigns of the progeny of Brutus, because it was absurd 'to be vainly curious about the time and circumstances of things, whereof the substance is so much in doubt'.² In the later books where his authorities were more trustworthy and he was dealing with historical events, it was worth while to discuss dates, to point out discrepancies, and to attempt to reconcile statements. The task, he admitted, was laborious, but he did not shrink from it. 'This travail, rather than not to know at once what may be known of our ancient story, sifted from fables and impertinences, I voluntarily undergo; and to save others, if they please, the like unpleasing labour.'³

Milton's favourite method, in the later books, is to place the different stories of his authorities side by side, and conclude by saying which account seems most probable. For instance, in relating the division of England between Canute and Edmund Ironside, he summarizes first Malmesbury's account, then that of Huntingdon, finally that of Matthew of Westminster. As to the accession of Edward the Confessor he gives the versions of Huntingdon, Malmesbury, and Brompton in succession, prefacing them with the remark, 'It may seem a wonder that our historians, if they deserve the name, should in a matter so remarkable and so near their own time so much differ.' He inclines to accept William of Malmesbury's version. In another instance, dealing with Harold's visit to William of Normandy, he sets side by side the statements of five authors, Malmesbury, Ingulf, Eadmer, Simeon of Durham, and Matthew Paris. 'So variously are these things reported' that he finds it impossible to decide.⁴

Incidentally he criticizes with some acuteness Ingulf's story, for, like seventeenth-century historians in general, he accepted his Chronicle of Croyland as a genuine authority. Ingulf had said that Edward the Confessor sent Robert Archbishop of Canterbury to acquaint Duke William with his intention of bequeathing the English crown to him. 'The former part may be true that King Edward upon such considerations had sent one or other, but Archbishop Robert was fled the land, and dead many years before.'⁵ In the same way Milton

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 265, 278, 295.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

rejects a statement of Simeon of Durham's which describes Uthred, son of the Earl of Northumberland, as fighting against Malcolm of Scotland: 'Here Simeon the relater seems to have committed some mistake, having slain Uthred by Canute two years before and set Eric in his place: Eric therefore it needs must be, not Uthred, who managed this war against the Scots'.¹

Milton's wide reading showed him that some of the statements he found in his authorities were merely conventional imitations of earlier historians. Speaking of the omens which accompanied William's landing on the English shore, he says, 'These things are related of Alexander and Caesar, and I doubt thence borrowed by the monks to inlay their story.'² At other times his good sense prevented him from believing implicitly what others had been content to accept on authority. Holinshed and Speed, for instance, repeat as a fact Malmesbury's statement that the English in Edgar's time owed their vices to 'the too much resort of strangers' to the country, learning rudeness of 'the outlandish Saxons', daintiness of the Flemings, and drunkenness of the Danes. 'I doubt,' comments Milton, 'these vices are as naturally home-bred here as in any of those countries.'³

Yet Milton, to use his own phrase, was not 'of too strict an incredulity', and tells us a few lines further, on the authority of Ingulf, 'This year died Swarling, a monk of Croyland, in the hundred and forty-second year of his age, and another soon after him in the hundred and fifteenth; in that fenny and waterish air the more remarkable.'⁴

To conclude this discussion of Milton's treatment of his authorities and his relation to previous historians.

It seems plain that Professor Masson went too far when he described the *History of Britain* as 'not a work of real research or criticism', but 'a mere popular compilation of such matter as was easily at hand'.⁵ Milton aimed higher and achieved more than this verdict admits. There is some attempt both at research and at criticism in the book. Milton frequently shows a very true conception of the value of the evidence at his disposal, as well as the independence of judgement one naturally expects from him.

The style also possesses the individuality which marks all Milton's writings. The earlier books are more carefully finished than the later ones. In books four and six Milton seems somewhat weary of his task; he is less attentive to the arrangement of his matter

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 269.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁵ *Life of Milton*, vi. 644.

² *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

or the effective statement of what he has to say. In the early part of the *History* he relates a story or describes a scene with a certain deliberate care—not only with touches that reveal the poet, but in the more highly-wrought passages with a certain sententious brevity entirely unlike the fervid and unrestrained diction of his first prose pamphlets. The explanation of this change of style is to be found in Milton's theory of the manner in which history should be written.

His views on the nature of historical writing in general are set forth in two passages in the *History*.

Every age, Milton hints, obtained the historians it deserved, for there was a close relation between the deeds and the written records of the deeds. In certain times, what happened was hardly worth recording. 'Ofttime we see that wise men, and of best ability, have forborn to write the acts of their own days, while they beheld with a just loathing and disdain, not only how unworthy, how perverse, how corrupt, but often how ignoble, how petty, how below all history, the persons and their actions were; who, either by fortune or some rude election, had attained, as a sore judgement and ignominy upon the land, to have chief sway in managing the commonwealth.'¹ Even then there were historians of a sort. 'It is true that in obscurest times, by shallow and unskilful writers, the indistinct noise of many battles and devastations of many kingdoms, overrun and lost, hath come to our ears.' But in such periods of decay true history was hardly possible; and good historians were discouraged. 'When the esteem of science and liberal study waxes low in the commonwealth, we may presume that also there all civil virtue and worthy action is grown as low to a decline: and then eloquence, as it were consorted in the same destiny, with the decrease and fall of virtue, corrupts also and fades; at least resigns her office of relating to illiterate and frivolous historians, such as the persons themselves both deserve, and are best pleased with; whilst they want either the understanding to choose better or the innocence to dare invite the examining and searching style of an intelligent and faithful writer to the survey of their unsound exploits, better befriended by obscurity than fame.'²

On the other hand, 'worthy deeds are not often destitute of worthy relaters, as, by a certain fate, great acts and great eloquence have most commonly gone hand in hand, equalling and honouring each other in the same ages.' For great men knew that history was necessary to their greatness.

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

‘He whose just and true valour uses the necessity of war and dominion not to destroy, but to prevent destruction, to bring in liberty against tyrants, law and civility among barbarous nations, knowing that when he conquers all things else, he cannot conquer Time or Detraction, wisely conscious of this his want, as well as of his worth not to be forgotten or concealed, honours and hath recourse to the aid of eloquence, his friendliest and best supply; by whose immortal record his noble deeds, which else were transitory, becoming fixed and durable against the force of years and generations, he fails not to continue through all posterity, over Envy, Death and Time also victorious.’¹

As to the manner in which the historian should relate the deeds he undertook to record, Milton set forth his views in two letters to a young foreign scholar, Henry de Brass.²

The model for all historical writers was Sallust. The man who appreciated Sallust had made no small progress in the art of history.³ ‘Dicam libere . . . Sallustium cuius Latino historico me quidem anteferre; quae etiam constans fere Antiquorum sententia fuit. Habet suas laudes tuus Tacitus; sed eas meo quidem iudicio maximas, quod Sallustium nervis omnibus sit imitatus.’ He proceeds then to explain his view of what Sallust meant when he said ‘facta dictis exaequanda sunt’.

‘Ego vero sic existimo; qui gestas res dignas digne scripserit, eum animo non minus magno rerumque usu praeditum scribere oportet, quam is qui eas gesserit; ut vel maximas pari animo comprehendere atque metiri possit, et comprehensas sermone puro atque casto graviterque narrare: nam ut ornate non admodum laboro; Historicum enim non Oratorem requiro. . . . Addiderim et illud Sallustianum, qua in re ipse Catonem maxime laudavit, posse multa paucis absolvere; id quod sine acerrimo iudicio, atque etiam temperantia quadam neminem posse arbitror. Sunt multi in quibus vel sermonis elegantiam vel congestarum rerum copiam non desideres; qui brevitate cum copia coniunxerit, id est, qui multa paucis absolverit, princeps meo iudicio Latinorum est Sallustius. Has ego virtutes Historico inesse putem oportere, qui facta dictis exaequaturum se speret.’⁴

This ‘Sallustiana brevitās’ as Quintilian terms it, Milton endeavours to imitate, not only in certain highly-wrought passages, but in the pregnant or picturesque phrases interspersed through his narrative.

¹ *History of Britain*, pp. 31-3.

² *Ioannis Miltoni Angli Epistolarum Familiarum Liber Unus*, 1674, pp. 53, 58; and *Prose Works*, v. 401, 405. See Masson, *Life of Milton*, v. 363, 379. The letters are dated July 15 and December 16, 1657.

³ ‘Sciat se haud parum in re Historica profecisse, cui placeat Sallustius.’

⁴ *Epistolae*, pp. 54-5.

Take, for instance, his summary of the results of the Roman Conquest. 'Of the Romans we have cause not to say much worse, than that they beat us into some civility'.¹ Or his comment on the attempt of Ethelred to buy off the Danes. 'The king and his courtiers . . . send now the fourth time to buy a dishonourable peace, every time still dearer (for the Danes knew how to milk such easy kine).' Or his description of the incursions of the Danes 'sallying forth out of their ships as out of savage dens' to plunder, and then 'like wild beasts glutted returned to their caves'. To vary the phrase in a second case he says 'or rather sea monsters to their water-stables'.²

The same quality marks some of Milton's characters of persons. He describes Carausius as usurping the government because he 'was grown at length too great a delinquent to be less than an emperor', and Vortigern as a tyrant who was 'yet of the people much beloved, because his vices sorted so well with theirs'.³ At times this attempt to put much meaning into few words produces obscurity. At other times it results in something like conceits; as when he describes the Britons 'with a stern compassion' slaying their wives and children to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Romans, or a Dane 'with a pious impiety' killing Archbishop Alfage in order to put an end to his sufferings.⁴

In one passage of his letters to Henry de Brass Milton lays down another principle which should be observed in historical writing. 'Crebras etiam sententias, et iudicia de rebus gestis interiecta prolixè nolle, ne, interrupta rerum serie, quod Politici Scriptoris munus est Historicus invadat; qui si in consiliis explicandis factisque enarrandis, non suum ingenium aut coniecturam, sed veritatem potissimum sequitur, suarum profecto partium satagit.' But he is far from following this counsel himself. It is true he does not insert many general reflections, but there are a few. On the Britons calling the Saxons to help them against the Picts and Scots he observes: 'So much do men through impatience count ever that the heaviest which they bear at present, and to remove the evil which they suffer, care not to pull on a greater; as if variety and change in evil also were acceptable'.⁵ When he relates the repentance of Canute and his resolve to make amends to his people, he adds: 'It is a fond conceit in many great ones, and pernicious in the end, to cease from no violence till they have attained the end of

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 49.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 109.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 252, 255.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 256.

their ambitions and desires; then to think God appeased by seeking to bribe him with a share, however large, of their illgotten spoils; and then, lastly, to grow zealous of doing right, when they have no longer need to do wrong.¹

But generally Milton's comments are not so much to the point: on the contrary, they are as far away from it as possible. He inserts reflections of every kind. Some are references to contemporary manners. When he describes the ancient Britons as 'painting their own skins with several portraitures of beast, bird, or flower', he adds, 'a vanity which hath not yet left us, removed only from the skin to the skirt, behung now with as many coloured ribbands and gewgaws'.² Others contain references to contemporary politics. Having to mention the expedition sent by a Northumbrian king to Ireland, he introduces an allusion to the Irish massacres in 1641: 'A harmless nation, saith Beda, and ever friendly to the English; in both which they seem to have left a posterity much unlike them at this day.'³ Milton's comments continually remind us that he held very strong views about the subjection of women. He is as bitter against 'the monstrous regiment of women' as John Knox himself. Cordelia's nephews rebel against her in spite of her virtues, 'not bearing that a kingdom should be governed by a woman,' and Cartismandua is dethroned by the Britons, not because of her crimes, but on account of 'the uncomeliness of their subjection to the monarchy of a woman'.⁴ When he relates, after Holinshed, the legend of Martia, wife of King Guitheline, who is said 'to have excelled so much in wisdom as to venture upon a new institution of laws', the story seems so monstrous that he has to rationalize it away. 'In the minority of her son she had the rule; and then, as may be supposed, brought forth those laws, not herself, for laws are masculine births, but by the advice of her sagest counsellors; and therein she might do virtuously, since it befel her to supply the nonage of her son, else nothing more awry from the law of God and nature than that a woman should give laws to men.'⁵

Perhaps the most curious example of Milton's prejudice against women is that afforded by his treatment of Boadicea. Previous historians had regarded the warrior-queen as a national heroine; he represents her merely as a virago, 'a distracted woman with as mad a crew at her heels.' Dion Cassius puts a long speech into Boadicea's mouth, which Holinshed and Speed reproduce at length. Milton

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 272.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 167; cf. p. 82.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 60.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

very properly rejects this oration. 'I affect not set speeches in a history, unless known for certain to have been so spoken in effect as they are written, nor then, unless worth rehearsal; and to invent such, though eloquently, as some historians have done, is an abuse of posterity, raising in them that read other conceptions of those times and persons than were true. Much less, therefore, do I purpose here or elsewhere to copy out tedious orations without decorum, though in their authors composed ready to my hand.'¹ The unseemliness of the oration consists in this, that Dion and also Tacitus put into the mouth of Boadicea, besides 'a deal of other fondness', the statement that 'with the Britons it was usual for a woman to be their leader'. Indignantly Milton observes: 'This they do out of vanity, hoping to embellish and set out their history with the strangeness of our manners, not caring in the meanwhile to brand us with the rankest note of barbarism, as if in Britain women were men and men women.'²

Milton's prejudices appear still more strongly and frequently in his references to Church matters. Of set purpose he avoided the ecclesiastical side of British and Saxon history as far as possible, 'not professing to relate of those matters more than what mixes aptly with civil affairs.'³ The records of political events were often an arid catalogue of names and dates, tragical deaths of princes of whom nothing else was known, and battles without reason or result. 'Such bickerings to recount, met often in these our writers,' complains Milton, 'what more worth is it than to chronicle the wars of kites, or crows flocking and fighting in the air?'⁴

But he deliberately refused to amplify these meagre annals by drawing upon the fund of information which his authorities supplied about the religious life of the times. 'I am sensible how wearisome it may likely be to read of so many and bare and reasonless actions, so many names of kings one after another acting little more than mute persons in a scene. What would it be to have inserted the long bead-roll of archbishops, bishops, abbots, abbesses, and their doings, neither to religion profitable, nor to morality, swelling my authors

¹ *History of Britain*, pp. 65-67.

² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 184. Hume quotes this: 'The history of that period abounds in names, but is extremely barren of events; or the events related so much without circumstances and causes that the most profound or most eloquent writer must despair of rendering them either instructive or entertaining to the reader. Even the great learning and vigorous imagination of Milton sunk under the weight, and this author scruples not to declare that the skirmishes of the kites or crows as much merited a particular narrative as the confused transactions and battles of the Saxon Heptarchy.'—*History of England*, i. 25.

each to a voluminous body, by me studiously omitted, and left as their propriety, who have a mind to write the ecclesiastical matters of those ages?'¹ The development of a scientific interest in the monuments and institutions of the past was one of the characteristics of seventeenth-century England, but so far as it showed itself in researches into ecclesiastical antiquities Milton took no interest in the movement. He scoffed at men like Dodsworth and Dugdale, 'who take pleasure to be all their lifetime raking the foundations of old abbeys and cathedrals.'² Though he professed to distinguish between antiquaries, 'whose labours are useful and laudable,' and 'antiquitarians', that is, 'those that over affect antiquity', and consequently oppose necessary changes in the Church, he evidently thought that all antiquaries tended to become antiquitarians. In his pamphlet *Of Reformation in England* he sneers at Camden as 'a fast friend of episcopacy, who cannot but love bishops as well as old coins and his much lamented monasteries for antiquity's sake'.³

Just as Milton failed to appreciate the value of researches into monastic antiquities, so he was insensible to the charm of the monastic legends. He had not hesitated for the sake of the poets to relate Geoffrey of Monmouth's fantastic fictions about the early British kings, but fabulous stories about events which occurred in historic times stood on a different footing. A vision might pass, but no story with a miracle in it should be told in his pages. Legends of martyrs were therefore excluded. Speaking of Alban of Verulam, he says that the story of his martyrdom 'soiled and worse martyred with the fabling zeal of some idle fancies, more fond of miracles than apprehensive of truth, deserves not longer digression'.⁴ The secret murder of Kenelm of Mercia was miraculously revealed, 'but to tell how,' says Milton, 'is a long story, though told out of order by Malmesbury, and under the year 821 by Matthew of Westminster, where I leave it to be sought by such as are more credulous than I wish my readers.'⁵

In Milton's attitude scientific incredulity was reinforced by Puritanical abhorrence of popery, and by contempt for the triviality of

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 177. Hume echoes this passage: 'It is almost impossible, and quite needless, to be more particular in relating the transactions of the East Angles. What instruction or entertainment can it give the reader to hear a long bead-roll of barbarous names, Egric, Annas, Ethelbert, Ethelwald, Aldulf, Elfwald, Beorne, Ethelred, Ethelbert, who successively murdered, expelled, or inherited from each other, and obscurely filled the throne of that kingdom?'—i. 40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

³ *Of Reformation in England*, *Prose Works*, i. 14.

⁴ *History of Britain*, p. 88.

⁵ *Ibid.*

ecclesiastical controversy, wherein he anticipates the philosophical historians of the next century. After Augustine had commenced the work of converting the men of Kent, Pope Gregory sent him a supply of fellow labourers. 'What they were,' says Milton, 'may be guessed by the stuff which they brought with them, vessels and vestments for the altar, copes, relics, and for the Archbishop Austin a pall to say mass in ; to such a rank superstition that age was grown, though some of them yet retaining an emulation of apostolic zeal.'¹ He is still more contemptuous when, having mentioned the Synod of Whitby, he has to refer to the controversy between the Irish and English clergy about the tonsure. 'Another clerical question was there also much controverted, not so superstitious in my opinion as ridiculous, about the right shaving of crowns.'² Of monastic institutions he speaks always with similar contempt, dwelling at length on their worst side and on their decay, never mentioning their services in their prime. 'In the days of Ina,' he relates, 'clerks and laics, men and women hasting to Rome in herds, thought themselves nowhere sure of eternal life till they were cloistered there.' Kings imitated their subjects : if one was 'forcibly shaven a monk', many others of their own free will 'got into a monk's hood'. Kelwulf of Northumberland became a monk in Lindisfarne, 'yet none of the severest,' says Milton, 'for he brought those monks from milk and water to wine and ale ; in which doctrine no doubt but they were soon docile, and well might, for Kelwulf brought with him good provision, great treasure and revenues of land, recited by Simeon, yet all under pretence of following (I use the author's words) poor Christ, by voluntary poverty : no marvel then if such applause were given by monkish writers to kings turning monks, and much cunning perhaps used to allure them.'³ The fruit of this predilection for monkish life was the ruin of Church and State. When at the beginning of the ninth century the Danish storm broke in England, the Saxons were ripe for conquest. They were 'broken with luxury and sloth, either secular or superstitious ; for laying aside the exercise of arms, and the study of all virtuous knowledge, some betook themselves to overworldly or vicious practice, others to religious idleness and solitude, which brought forth nothing but vain and delusive visions ; easily perceived such by their commanding of things, either not belonging to the gospel, or utterly forbidden, ceremonies, relics, monasteries, masses, idols ; add to these ostentation of alms, got oftentimes by rapine and oppression, or intermixed with violent and lustful deeds,

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 141.

² *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 173, 176, 180.

sometimes prodigally bestowed as the expiation of cruelty and bloodshed'. Thus religion itself had grown void of sincerity, and the greatest shows of purity had become impure.¹

There is one omission in Milton's references to ecclesiastical affairs which at first surprises the reader. He does not attack episcopacy. In 1641 he had thought nothing too bad to say of the bishops. 'Most certain it is (as all our stories bear witness) that ever since their coming to the see of Canterbury, for nearly twelve hundred years, to speak of them in general, they have been in England to our souls a sad and doleful succession of illiterate and blind guides; to our purses and goods a wasteful kind of robbers, a perpetual havoc and rapine; to our state a continual hydra of mischief and molestation, the forge of discord and rebellion.'² In the *History*, however, Milton is almost completely silent about the bishops. Incidentally he remarks how quickly Augustine and his successors 'stepped up into fellowship of pomp with kings'. On the other hand, he inserts an unexpectedly favourable character of Dunstan: 'a strenuous bishop, zealous without dread of persons, and for aught appears, the best of many ages, if he busied not himself too much in secular affairs.'³

Perhaps this absence of attacks on bishops is to be explained by the fact that they were suppressed by the licenser. Toland says: 'The Licensers, those sworn officers to destroy learning, liberty, and good sense, expunged several passages of it, wherein he exposed the superstitious pride and cunning of the popish monks in the Saxon times, but applied by the sagacious Licensers to Charles the Second's bishops.'⁴ But the number of attacks upon 'the popish monks' which remain seem to refute the story that such indirect thrusts at Milton's old enemies were struck out. Some remarks against the bishops perhaps disappeared owing to the censorship, but there is a better explanation of their absence. Bishops had been abolished before Milton began to write his *History*. Since 1646 'new presbyter' not 'old priest' had been Milton's mark.⁵ In the *History* he used the primitive bishops as a stalking-horse against the Presbyterians. Relating the story that three British bishops who attended the Synod of Rimini in 354 accepted the emperor's offer to pay their expenses rather than the subsidies offered by the brethren, 'esteeming it more honourable to live on the public than

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 190.

² *Of Reformation, Prose Works*, i. 60.

³ *History of Britain*, pp. 141, 245.

⁴ Toland, *Life of John Milton*, 1699, p. 138.

⁵ Sonnet 'On the New Forces of Conscience under the Long Parliament'.

to be obnoxious to any private purse,' he adds the comment: 'doubtless an ingenuous mind, and far above the presbyters of our age; who like well to sit in assembly on the public stipend, but liked not the poverty that caused these to do so.'¹ Under cover of describing after Gildas the vices of the British clergy in the sixth century, he inserts phrases aimed at modern ministers. 'Pastors in name but in deed wolves,' 'seizing on the ministry as a trade, not as a spiritual charge,' 'intent not to feed the flock but to pamper and well line themselves,' who 'keep in awe the superstitious multitude' with 'niceties and trivial points' but 'in true saving knowledge leave them still as gross and stupid as themselves'.² Lest there should be any mistake made by his readers, Milton placed at the beginning of Book III a comparison between the state of Britain when the Romans left it and that of England in 1647 and 1648, containing a direct denunciation of the self-seeking of the divines of the Westminster Assembly and their demand for compulsion in matters of conscience.³

This great digression shows how impossible it was for Milton to avoid referring to the problems of the present when he was writing about the events of the past. To utter freely what he felt about 'so dear a concernment' as his country's weal was a necessity of his nature. Just as Carlyle was obliged to suspend his study of Cromwell in order to express in *Past and Present* his feelings about the condition of England in 1843, so Milton interrupted his *History of Britain* in order to say what he thought about the condition of England in 1648. As the Civil War drew towards its close, the result of 'all this waste of wealth and loss of blood' became doubtful. In the two years of confusion which followed, no stable settlement was attained, and it seemed as if none was attainable. The king had been practically set aside, but the Parliament seemed unable to govern. To Milton, England appeared to be in the position of Britain when the Roman rule ended. When the Romans left the country, the Britons 'thus relinquished, and by all right the government relapsing into their own hands, thenceforth betook themselves to live after their own laws.' But they failed to erect a stable government. 'They seemed awhile to bestir themselves with a show of diligence in their new affairs, some secretly aspiring to rule, others adoring the name of liberty, yet so soon as they felt by proof the weight of what it was to govern well themselves, and

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 90. He refers to this again in *The Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, *Prose Works*, iii. 376.

² *History of Britain*, p. 129.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 100; *Prose Works*, ed. Mitford, iii. 94-101.

what was wanting in them, not stomach or the love of licence, but the wisdom, the virtue, the labour to use and maintain true liberty, they soon remitted their heat, and shrunk more wretchedly under the burden of their own liberty than before under a foreign yoke.'¹ England now was in a similar condition. Fortune seemed 'to have put liberty so long desired like a bride into their hands'. The faults of the Britons 'brought those ancient natives to misery and ruin by liberty, which rightly used might have made them happy', as the faults of the English had brought them now, 'after many labours, much bloodshed and vast expense, to ridiculous frustration.'²

What were the causes of this failure? When the Long Parliament met the people chose to represent them 'such as they thought best affected to the public good'. Some were men of wisdom and integrity, but the greater part merely of men of wealth or ambition. These last, 'when their superficial zeal was spent,' betook themselves every one to follow his own ends. Justice was delayed and denied; spite and favour determined all; everywhere there was wrong and oppression. The members shared offices, gifts, and preferments amongst themselves; instead of enacting good laws they did nothing but impose new taxes; instead of paying the just debts of the State they cheated its creditors.³ Fearful of being called to account, they fomented fresh troubles and invented new business in order to avoid the necessity of laying down their authority.

Religion was in as bad a plight as the State. The Westminster Assembly had been selected to reform the Church. Its members, after crying down pluralists and non-residents, had become pluralists and non-residents themselves. They called as loudly for compulsion in matters of religion against others as they had complained of it when exercised against themselves, and strove to set up a spiritual tyranny by the aid of the secular power. Seeing the incapacity of their statesmen, the people became disaffected, and seeing the hypocrisy of their ministers, they ceased to believe in religion.

'Thus,' continues Milton, 'they who of late were extolled as our greatest deliverers, and had the people wholly at their devotion, by so discharging their trust as we see, did not only weaken and unfit

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 100. Milton elsewhere refers to this period to prove that British kings were elected by the people, and could be deposed by them. See p. 107, and *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *Prose Works*, ii. 472.

² The ridiculousness of failure to maintain freedom after such efforts to gain it is in 1660 the keynote of Milton's *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*, when the position resembled that in 1648. *Prose Works*, iii. 425.

³ Compare Milton's Sonnet to Fairfax, written in August 1648.

themselves to be dispensers of what liberty they pretended, but unfitted also the people, now grown worse and more disordinate, to receive or digest any liberty at all. For stories teach us, that liberty sought out of season, in a corrupt and degenerate age, brought Rome itself into a farther slavery: for liberty hath a sharp and double edge, fit only to be handled by just and virtuous men; to bad and dissolute, it becomes a mischief unwieldy in their own hands: neither is it completely given, but by them who have the happy skill to know what is grievance and unjust to a people, and how to remove it wisely; what good laws are wanting, and how to frame them substantially, that good men may enjoy the freedom which they merit, and the bad the curb which they need. But to do this, and to know these exquisite proportions, the heroic wisdom which is required surmounted far the principles of these narrow politicians: what wonder then if they sunk as these unfortunate Britons before them, entangled and oppressed with things too hard and generous above their strain and temper?'¹

Then, having stated the causes of this failure, Milton explained the cure. Englishmen, 'to speak a truth not often spoken,' were not born statesmen. England was a land 'fruitful enough of men stout and courageous in war', but at the same time 'not over-fertile naturally of men able to govern wisely and prudently in peace'. The national character was in fault: it was rude, intractable and unteachable—he almost says unintelligent. Public spirit and similar qualities 'grow not here but in minds well implanted with solid and elaborate breeding'. Just as certain products must be imported to our island from sunnier lands, 'so must ripe understanding and many civil virtues be imported into our minds from foreign writings and examples of best ages.' If England was to succeed in great enterprises she must have men with the education of statesmen to conduct her affairs—not politicians 'trusting only in their mother wit' or tradesmen 'called from shops and warehouses to sit in supreme councils', but 'men more than vulgar, bred up in the knowledge of ancient and illustrious deeds'.

Here Milton's tract *Of Education* and his *History of Britain* explain each other. When he wrote in 1644 that the reforming of education was a thing 'for the want whereof this nation perishes', he did not mean that England was perishing for want of scholars, but for want of statesmen. His imaginary pupils were from the first to be 'stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God and famous to all ages', and in the end

¹ *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament*, p. 9.

to be fit 'to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war'. Thus to qualify them, one of their studies must be the study of politics. They should be taught to know 'the beginning, end, and reasons of political societies; that they may not, in a dangerous fit of the commonwealth, be such poor, shaken, uncertain reeds, of such a tottering conscience, as many of our great counsellors have lately shown themselves, but steadfast pillars of the State'.¹

'Choice histories' were also to be put into their hands, and in the *History of Britain* Milton explains what he conceived to be the practical value of his national history to a statesman. It could teach him to understand the character of his countrymen in its strength and weakness. By comparing the past and present, we can 'raise a knowledge of ourselves both great and weighty', and judge what we are able to achieve. 'For if it be a high point of wisdom in every private man, much more is it in a nation, to know itself, rather than puffed up with vulgar flatteries and encomiums, for want of self-knowledge, to enterprise rashly and come off miserably in great undertakings.'²

With the exception of the first paragraph, the whole of this long digression was omitted when Milton published his *History* in 1670. The passage was published in 1681, after his death, under the title of *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and the Assembly of Divines*. According to the publisher, Mr. Milton had intended the 'Character' to be printed in his *History*, 'but out of tenderness to a party (whom neither this nor much more lenity has had the luck to oblige) it was struck out for some harshness, being only such a digression as the *History* itself would not be discomposed by its omission.'³

Yet, while the suppressed passage is undoubtedly Milton's, and is correctly placed at the beginning of the third book, the explanation given of its omission is obviously absurd. The publisher recommended it as 'very seasonable for these times', and it would have been equally seasonable in 1670. It was printed now as a controversial weapon against the Presbyterians and the Nonconformists, and it could have been printed eleven years earlier for the same reason. For there was no thought in 1670 of any tenderness towards that party, as the

¹ *Prose Works*, ii. 384, 385, 388.

² *History of Britain*, p. 100. Of the digression there remains in the text thirteen lines on p. 99 and eleven and a half on the next page. The rest was omitted.

³ Masson, *Life of Milton*, pp. 806-7.

passing of the second Conventicle Act in that year proved. Any licenser would have welcomed the denunciation of the Assembly of Divines as a powerful argument in favour of the policy of the king's government.

The most reasonable explanation is that Milton suppressed the passage himself. All had changed since 1648. The Assembly of Divines was a thing of the past, and its survivors were now persecuted rather than persecutors. The Long Parliament had come to an end: obscurity, or captivity, or the scaffold had been the fate of its leaders, and Milton was more inclined to lament their sufferings than to point out their trespasses or omissions in the day of their power. Englishmen themselves, instead of attempting the high enterprise of erecting a free state, had contentedly relapsed into their old servitude. Milton, therefore, whilst retaining the suggested parallel between the condition of the Britons in the fifth century and that of the English at the close of the first civil war, eliminated the application to the politics of 1648. It had lost all practical utility.

Yet since all history should 'instruct and benefit them that read', the moral of the whole story should be made plain.¹ Poet or historian, Milton was ever a preacher, and used British history for the purpose of edification just as he would have used his British epic. To his eyes the significance of the revolutions he had related was clear. Each successive conquest of Britain was a just judgement on the conquered race. The Britons were mere barbarians, 'progenitors not to be gloried in,' naturally and deservedly subdued by the Romans. Roman civilization served but to prepare them for bondage. Freedom made them worse instead of better, till 'scarce the least footstep or impression of goodness was left remaining through all ranks and degrees in the land; except in some so very few as hardly to be visible in a general corruption.'² Hence 'the many miseries and desolations brought by a divine hand on a perverse nation; driven, when nothing else could reform them, out of a fair country into a mountainous and barren corner by strangers and pagans. So much more tolerable in the eye of heaven is infidelity professed than Christian faith and religion dishonoured by unchristian works.'³ By the ninth century 'the Saxons were full as wicked as the Britons were at their arrival'. They fell before the Danes because God purposed 'to punish our instrumental punishers, though now Christians, by other heathen, according to His divine retaliation, invasion for invasion, spoil for spoil, destruction for destruction'.

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 71, 108, 128.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Vain had been the union of the seven kingdoms under one rule, for 'when God hath decreed servitude on a sinful nation, fitted by their own vices for no condition but servile, all estates of government are alike unable to avoid it'.¹

Such, too, were the causes of the Norman Conquest. By their vices the English had 'fitted themselves for this servitude'. The clergy had 'lost all good literature and religion'; the great men were 'given to gluttony and dissolute life'; the meaner sort 'spent all they had in drunkenness. . . . Some few of all sorts were much better among them; but such was the generality.' And as the long-suffering of God 'permits bad men to enjoy prosperous days with the good, so His severity oftentimes exempts not good men from their share in evil times with the bad'.

It remained only to apply this moral to the present moment, and to warn the England of Charles II. Milton does this in the last sentence of his *History*, added evidently in 1670: 'If these were the causes of such misery and thralldom to our ancestors, with what better close can be concluded, than here in fit season to remember this age in the midst of her security, to fear from like vices, without amendment, the revolution of like calamities.'²

¹ *History of Britain*, p. 190.

² The inseparable connexion between liberty and virtue was the fundamental doctrine of Milton's political pamphlets as well as his *History*, and he emphasized it both in *Paradise Lost* and in *Paradise Regained*. Men, explains the Archangel Michael to Adam, lost their inward freedom when they allowed their passions to 'catch the government from reason', and the loss of their outward freedom followed. It was so with nations too.

'Sometimes nations will decline so low
From virtue, which is freedom, that no wrong
But Justice, and some fatal curse annex
Deprives them of their outward liberty,
Their inward lost.'

Nor was it possible to deliver them. 'Who can of inward slaves make outward free?' replies Christ to the Tempter.



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Comparison of Dante
and Milton

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W. J. Courthope

Fellow of the Academy

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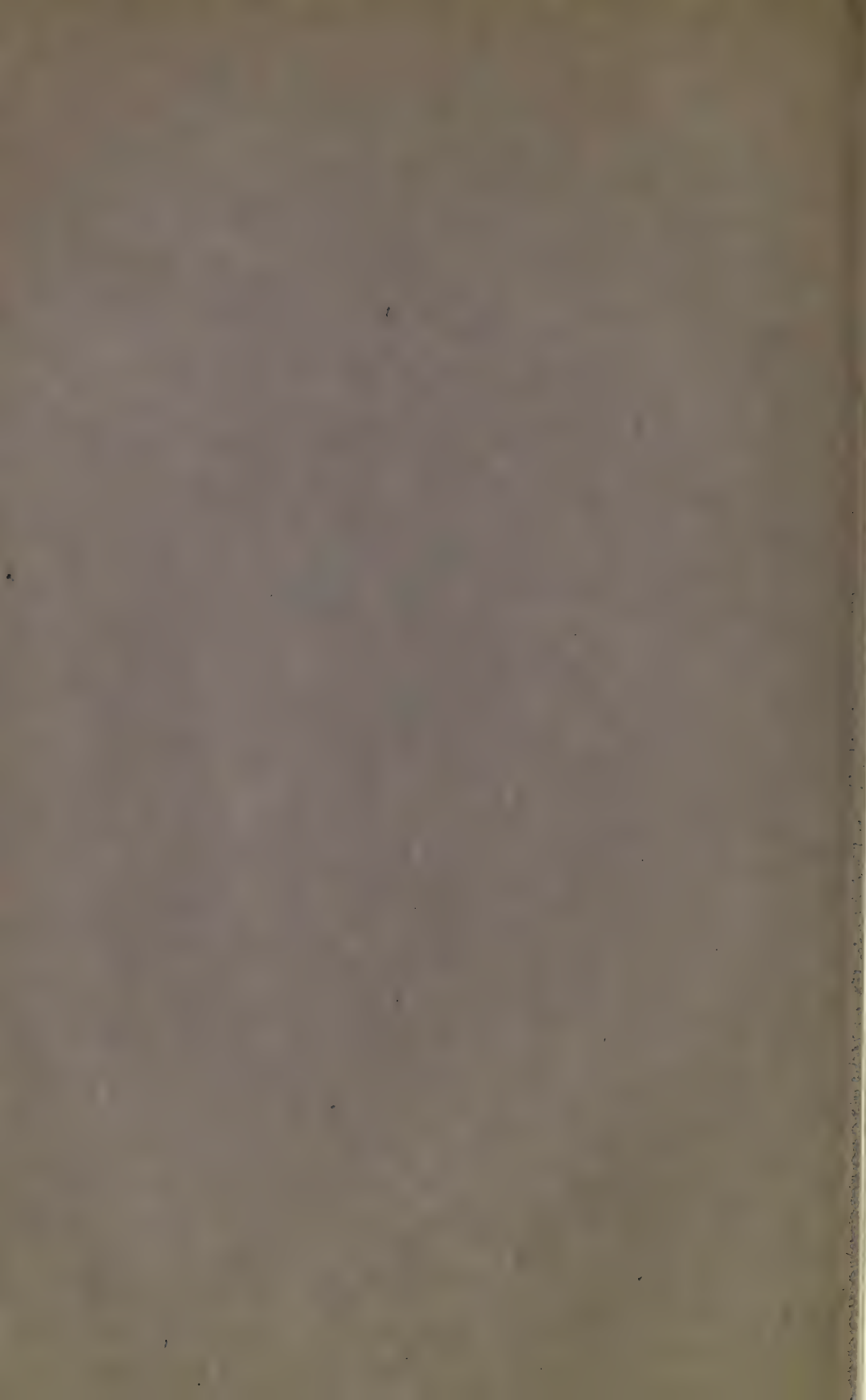
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A CONSIDERATION OF MACAULAY'S COMPARISON OF DANTE AND MILTON

By W. J. COURTHOPE

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Read December 10, 1908

MACAULAY'S Essay on Milton is one of his most remarkable performances. Though in it he was making his appearance in the *Edinburgh Review* for the first time, it exhibits in a distinct form all the qualities that characterize his mature style. It contains passages of striking eloquence. It shows him to be already a past master in the art of creating literary effects, such as the artistic arrangement of subject-matter, the concentration of interest on a few leading points, the subtle interrelation of paragraphs, and even the epigrammatic sequence of sentences. Above all it deserves study as a skilful example of party panegyric.

Panegyric, or the art of bestowing praise on persons, admits of many varieties of treatment, and is practised with different degrees of success, according to the character of the person praised, of the audience, the time, the place, the occasion, and a hundred other external circumstances. Its simplest and most common form is that of direct flattery, human nature being so constituted as to be able to swallow an almost unlimited quantity of this, even when the quality is of an inferior kind. Panegyrical orators, when praising a Roman Emperor, were expected to lay on the colours without any attempt at chiaroscuro. Much on the same principle, though on a smaller scale, the family panegyrist, on a church monument, records the virtues of deceased persons in terms which make them only a little lower than the angels. The flattering dedicator of the eighteenth century adopted a like method when praising his aristocratic patron. Even in our own democratic age we are familiar with this form of panegyric. In that essentially modern species of personal criticism which is called an 'Appreciation', anything in the shape of a qualifying or negative statement must be carefully avoided; and when a weekly review discovers the excellence of a new poet or a

promising novelist, it is necessary for the friendly critic to call the attention of the reader to his author's merits by declaring that Mr. A. B. C. is the greatest master of his art who has appeared since Shakespeare, or that Mrs. X. Y. Z., in her romance, unites the philosophy of a George Eliot with the observation of a Jane Austen.

Panegyric Absolute, as it may be called, is generally only applicable when the person praised is so powerful that the rest of the audience may be left out of account, or when the audience is so little disposed to criticize that the most exaggerated terms of praise will probably be found the most effective. In the case of an audience at once instructed and unprejudiced, the panegyric orator who wishes to praise a party or a person has to take into account the existence of envy and suspicion in the constitution of human nature, and to remember that, before supreme excellence can be allowed to any man or woman, their merits must be exposed to strict examination. He must be prepared with at least the appearance of judicial panegyric, a form of praise for which a much higher degree of art is required than for the panegyric absolute. Of the methods employed in this kind of eulogy by far the most impressive is that of the Devil's Advocate, which used once to be applied in trials of aspirants for canonization. In order to demonstrate the full glory of the Saint it was necessary to show some suspicion of human frailty in his nature, the case for which, having been plausibly stated by the counsel for the Evil One, was immediately afterwards triumphantly demolished by the champions of Heavenly Truth. This procedure has been copied in literature, and is an invaluable instrument in the hands of a skilful partizan. As I said to begin with, one of the most admirable specimens of party panegyric is to be found in Macaulay's Essay on Milton; and in this Devil's Advocacy is freely used.

Macaulay, with much candour, announces at the opening of his Essay that he intends to be Milton's panegyrist. 'We turn,' he says, 'for a short time from the topics of the day, to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.' At the same time he alleges that, in these various capacities, some objections have been raised against the reputation of the proposed Saint, which have to be removed before the possession of a spotless character can be fully established. 'His detractors,' we are told, 'though outvoted have not been silenced,' and a statement is then

made of the objection which the Devil's Advocate is supposed to have raised to Milton's supremacy as a poet. 'Milton, it is said, inherited what his predecessors created; he lived in an enlightened age; he received a finished education; and we must therefore, if we would form a just estimate of his powers, make large deductions in consideration of these advantages.' As for his political character, the Devil's Advocate, in Macaulay's representation of him, points out that Milton is liable to the charge of being a justifier of Regicide, and that, though 'an enthusiastic votary of liberty', he held office under a despot. When these objections have been duly formulated, Macaulay proceeds with much thoroughness to overthrow them, thereby proving, negatively at least, that there is nothing which can possibly bar the way to the proposed canonization.

The general principles on which Milton acted having been examined and vindicated, it remains for the panegyrist to exalt his individual character by means of contrast and comparison. It may be confidently asserted that nowhere have these arts been more brilliantly applied than in Macaulay's Essay. Politically, the figure of Milton, standing in a vivid light, is brought into relief against the dark colours of the historical background. The virtues and defects of the Puritan party, on the one hand, and of the Cavalier party and the Republican Humanists, on the other, are first graphically painted. Then, says Macaulay, 'Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a free-thinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and the Court, from the Conventicle and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled.' In Poetry, as Macaulay justly says, 'the only poem of modern times which can be compared with the *Paradise Lost* is the *Divine Comedy*.' And here, though he declines to decide the claim of superiority between the styles of the two poems, he takes advantage of the contrast of character between Dante and Milton, to heighten the panegyric on his own Saint. A portrait is first painted of Dante, which is scarcely calculated to arouse admiration or affection. 'No person,' we are told, 'can look on features noble even to ruggedness, the dark furrows of the cheek, the haggard and woful stare of the

eye, the sullen and contemptuous curve of the lip, and doubt that they belong to a man too proud and too sensitive to be happy.' But as to the companion picture:

'Milton,' it is said, 'was like Dante a statesman and a lover; and, like Dante, he had been unfortunate in ambition and in love. He had survived his health and his sight, the comforts of his home, and the prosperity of his party. Of the great men by whom he had been distinguished at his entrance into life, some had been taken away from the evil to come; some had carried into foreign climates their unconquerable hatred of oppression; some were pining in dungeons; and some had poured forth their blood on scaffolds. Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in the style of a bellman, were now the favourite writers of the sovereign and of the public. It was a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial, half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances. Amidst these that fair Muse was placed, like the chaste Lady of the Masque, lofty, spotless, and serene, to be chattered at, and pointed at, and grinned at by the whole rout of Satyrs and Goblins. If ever despondency and asperity could be excused in any man they might have been excused in Milton. But the strength of his mind overcame every calamity. Neither blindness, nor gout, nor age, nor penury, nor domestic affliction, nor neglect, had power to disturb his sedate and majestic patience. His spirits do not seem to have been high, but they were singularly equable. His temper was serious, perhaps stern; but it was a temper which no suffering could render sullen or fretful. Such as it was when, on the eve of great events, he returned from his travels, in the prime of health and of manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes, such it continued to be when, after having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature—old, poor, sightless, and disgraced—he retired to his hovel to die.'

Comparison is a most valuable method in criticism. It gives life, colour, clearness, and relative proportion, to our view of individual objects in a way which would be quite impossible if things were judged entirely by themselves. But when used for the purposes of panegyric it is open to many objections, and Macaulay's Essay on Milton is no exception to this rule. In the first place it is steeped in the atmosphere of party. We seem to hear the key-

note struck in the gruff observation of Johnson: 'Sir, the dog was a Whig'; to which Macaulay makes the quick reply: 'Yes, and that is precisely the ground on which I shall claim his canonization as a saint.' Whiggism is the pivot on which the whole panegyric turns. 'His public conduct,' says Macaulay, 'was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high and of an intellect so powerful. He lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind, at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes, liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. The great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with an unwonted fear.' Rhetoric of this kind might be effective in the days of the Holy Alliance, but in our own age it seems a little old-fashioned and out of date. Milton's fame is immortal, and he can hardly be adequately praised by claiming for party services which were meant for mankind.

Again, a certain resentment is roused in the mind of a fair-judging audience when Milton's political character and conduct are praised at the expense of Dante's. Both, it is admitted, were partizans; but while Milton's actions are justified on the plea of public necessity, Dante's, it is implied, were the fruits of an ill-conditioned nature. Attention is called to his proud, sullen, and unhappy temper, in contrast with Milton's angelic patience and serenity. This is scarcely just. Dante's pride and severity need not be denied, nor the intensity of his party hatreds. We have only to recall his treatment of Argenti in Hell and his interview with Farinata to realize the strength of the hereditary antipathies in the midst of which he lived. 'Who were your ancestors?' is the first question put to him by the Ghibelline heretic; and so passionate is the desire of Farinata to learn that his own descendants have made their faction prevail, that he declares, 'if they have learned that art badly, it torments me more than this bed.' But the expression of such feelings is even more the effect of local circumstances than of personal character; it springs from the concentration of all political action within the narrow compass of a single city. There is, indeed, none of this local or personal spirit in

Milton's partizanship, but of the vehemence of his party spirit we have evidence enough. We have only to open his *Apology for Smectymnus*, or his *Iconoclastes*, to light on passages showing that, at least in his detestation of the royalist party, his Whiggism was as staunch as the Ghibellinism of Farinata: in the one case the hatred concentrates itself on city families; in the other the scale is extended to include a national faction. Take, for example, the following from *Iconoclastes*:

'The people, exorbitant and excessive in all their motions, are prone ofttimes, not to a religious only but a civil kind of idolatry, as idolizing their kings, though never more mistaken in the object of their worship; heretofore being wont to repute for saints those faithful and courageous barons, who lost their lives in the field, making glorious war against tyrants for the common liberty, as Simon de Monfort, Earl of Leicester, against Henry the Third; Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster, against Edward the Second. But now with a besotted and degenerate baseness of spirit, except some few, who yet retain in them the old English fortitude and love of freedom, and testified it by their matchless deeds, the rest, embastardized from the ancient nobleness of their ancestors, are ready to fall flat, and give adoration to the image and memory of this man who hath offered at more cunning fetches to undermine our liberties, and put tyranny into an art, than any British king before him.'

The echo of language like this by Milton's modern English panegyrist, who tells us that, in those days, 'the principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean,' is surely only a variant of the party dialect of the Florentine Farinata. Again, when Milton's 'sedate and majestic patience' in misfortune is heightened by contrast with the intensity of Dante's bitter indignation, we note the partiality of the panegyrist. If Dante complains of the saltiness of the bread of exile and the hardness of his patron's stairs, Milton, in the midst of his heavenly theme, can pause to speak of his own blindness and loneliness:

Though fallen on evil days,
On evil days though fallen and evil tongues,
With darkness and with dangers compast round,
And solitude.

Nor should it be forgotten that Dante had more right than Milton to complain of the injustice with which he had been treated. He was exiled from Florence by his own party, because, in the perform-

ance of his public duty, he was accused of showing too much indulgence to his opponents; whereas Milton, as a defender of regicides, had no reason to look for other than harsh treatment, when the royalist party returned to power: nevertheless his name was not entered among those of the persons excluded from the Act of Oblivion. Dante died in exile. His anticipations of a triumphant return to Florence were not fulfilled: the day never came which—to use his own imagery—‘should conquer the cruelty that bars me from the beautiful fold where once I slept as a lamb at enmity with the wolves that warred against it.’ He was buried in the alien soil of Ravenna. Macaulay’s picture of Milton’s last days, his contrast between the time when he returned from his travels ‘loaded with literary distinctions and glowing with patriotic hopes’ and the time when, ‘having experienced every calamity which is incident to our nature, old, poor, sightless, and disgraced, he retired to his hovel to die,’ is the exaggerated rhetoric of the partizan. Milton never retired to a hovel to die, but in 1661 took a small house near Bunhill Fields, where he lived unmolested for more than thirteen years, quietly engaged in the production of his great poems, and often visited by members of the nobility and foreigners attracted by his illustrious reputation. He was, as Johnson says, ‘buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles at Cripplegate. His funeral was splendidly and numerously attended.’

Not only does Macaulay use the character of Dante as a foil to set off the superior moral excellence of Milton, but he compares the *Divine Comedy* with *Paradise Lost*, in order to establish the supremacy of Milton’s genius in poetry. And here the defects in his methods of party panegyric are seen in a new light. For the purpose of proving his particular conclusions, he finds it necessary to propound general principles which will not bear examination. Thus, having put forward his objecting man of straw, with a proposition which, as far as I am aware, has never been advanced by any critic of repute—namely, that Milton cannot be accounted a great poet because he had the advantage of living in a highly civilized age—he proceeds to encounter this with a gigantic paradox. ‘We think,’ he says, ‘that as civilization advances poetry almost necessarily declines.’ Setting aside the fact that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* themselves reflect the manners of a considerably advanced stage of civilization, it seems surprising that Macaulay should never have asked himself how, on his principle, it came to pass that the Odes of Pindar, the plays of the Greek dramatists, the *Aeneid*, the *Divine Comedy*, in fact every

really great poem that the world possesses, were produced in a highly civilized age. By what reasoning would he have attempted to prove that in English poetry there had been a continuous decline since the days of Chaucer? One paradox necessarily led him on to another, and committed him to his obviously inadequate definition of poetry. 'By poetry,' he says, 'we mean the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination, the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours.' Evidently this definition covers only the descriptive parts of poetry; it takes no account either of the active or of the emotional elements which are involved in the art, and which the painter, whose representations deal necessarily with a single moment of time, can express but imperfectly. Action, character, pathos, though the poet must clothe them in words, cannot always find a vehicle in imagery; verbal images have little to do with what is poetical in the character and situation of *Antigone* or *Imogen*. How many images are there in Satan's address to the Sun in *Paradise Lost*, or in Helen's lament in the *Iliad* over the body of Hector? Having, however, thus restricted the art of poetry to the employment of verbal imagery, Macaulay proceeds to contrast the practice of Dante in the *Divine Comedy* and of Milton in *Paradise Lost* on this ground. 'The poetry of Milton,' he says, 'differs from that of Dante as the hieroglyphics of Egypt differed from the picture-writing of Mexico. The images which Dante employs speak for themselves; they stand simply for what they are. Those of Milton have a significance which is often discernible only to the initiated. Their value depends less on what they directly represent than on what they remotely suggest.' He then cites a number of passages from each poem to illustrate his meaning; and these, being excellently chosen, appear to establish the point for which he is contending.

Even accepting Macaulay's narrow definition of poetry, his criticism of the styles of Dante and Milton seems to me to be the exact inverse of the truth. Far from it being true that the images which Dante employs 'speak for themselves, stand simply for what they are', Dante himself explains that the sense of his poem 'is by no means simple, nay, rather may be called polysensuous, or of many senses'. Four methods of interpretation, he says, are to be applied to it, 'literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical.' And again, Beatrice, in the *Paradiso*, says to Dante, explaining the unreality of the objects which appear to him: 'Thus it is necessary to speak to your wit, since it is only from an object of sense that it apprehends what it afterwards makes fit

matter for the understanding.' This shows us that, in spite of the great distinctness of imagery in the *Divine Comedy*, it is a mistake to suppose, with Macaulay, that the distinctness is employed 'simply to make the meaning of the writer as clear to the reader as it is to himself'. It is employed really because the whole atmosphere of Dante's poem is allegorical; because objects of sense have with him a spiritual meaning, which can be fully grasped only by a process of reason and reflection.

Again, it is of course the case that, as compared with the imagery of Dante, the imagery of Milton is indistinct, and is conveyed by means of simile and comparison. But this does not imply that Milton's imagery has, as Macaulay says, 'a signification which is often discernible only to the initiated'; were such the case, *Paradise Lost* would never have attained its universally recognized position as one of the great poems of the world. Nor does Milton deliberately—to use Macaulay's words—'avoid loathsome details, and take refuge in indistinct and solemn imagery.' The reason of the different method he employs in describing the lazar house in the eleventh book of *Paradise Lost*, as compared with the description of the last ward of Malebolge in the *Inferno*, is, that he is writing in the classical epic style, while Dante employs the style suited to mediæval allegory. The topography of *Paradise Lost* seems, of course, indistinct by the side of the topography of the *Divine Comedy*; but this is due to the fact that Milton's conception of the universe was more spacious than that of the Florentine poet; the mental picture of Satan's voyage from Hell to Eden is as clearly painted, on its own scale, as is the descent of Dante and Virgil through the successive circles of the *Inferno*. It is, moreover, 'directly represented,' not 'remotely suggested,' because the narrative of it is, in a sense, historical and epical, and is in no way invested with an allegorical meaning.

To bestow upon either Dante or Milton the meed of praise rightly due to such famous persons, and to accentuate and emphasize this by a just comparison between them, they must be raised high above the atmosphere of partizanship, political or literary. Each must be regarded as being, in his particular circumstances, a representative of humanity; both are protagonists in that battle of life which has been proceeding continuously from the beginning of the Christian era; their works 'hold the mirror up to Nature, and show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'. Viewed in this light, Dante will stand forth as the type of the action and thought of the Middle Ages, embodied in the person of a Florentine citizen; Milton, as an incarnation of the great movements of the Reformation

and the Renaissance, operating on the arena of English politics. These conditions too will furnish the reasons for that striking contrast of imagery in the *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, to which Macaulay restricts his comparison of the styles of the two poets, and will explain why allegory is made the vehicle of one poem, while the form of the Classical epic is adopted in the other. I will venture, in the brief time at my disposal, to call attention to a few leading points which may help to make the parallel striking and suggestive.

To begin with, it is useful to note, in the conception and execution of the two poems, certain similarities, one at least of which serves to show that Dante and Milton were workers at different stages of a single movement of civilization. Both of them originally intended to embody a great poetical scheme in the Latin tongue, because in their day Latin was still accounted the sovereign language of literature. Two hexameters and a half of Dante's intended opening of his vision are preserved in a letter of a certain Frate Ilario, and show that the poem was meant to have an epic form; while Milton, in a Latin poem addressed to Manso, sketches the outlines of a Latin epic on King Arthur, which he was then revolving. Both abandoned this form of expression in favour of their vernacular language on characteristic grounds. When Frate Ilario objected the difficulty of expressing the weighty matter of the *Divine Comedy* in common speech, Dante replied: 'You are doubtless reasonable in what you think . . . yet when I considered the circumstances of the present age, I saw that the songs of famous poets went almost for nought; wherefore men of gentle blood, who wrote in better times, abandoned the liberal arts to the plebeian crowd. Accordingly I laid aside the little lyre to which at first I trusted, and tuned another, suited to the sense of modern men; for it is idle to set solid food before the lips of sucklings.' Milton's reason for discarding Latin was at once similar and different: 'There ought no regard be sooner had than to God's glory by the honour and instruction of my country. For which cause, and not only for that I knew it would be hard to arrive at the second rank among the Latins, I applied myself to that resolution which Ariosto followed against the persuasions of Bembo, to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue.'

Again, there is much similarity in the lofty and serious spirit in which both Dante and Milton, having conceived great poetical designs, deliberately postponed the execution of them. Dante, as he

himself tells us, found his motive of inspiration in the desire to glorify the memory of Beatrice. 'After a year,' he says, 'it was given to me to behold a very wonderful vision, wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of that most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. Wherefore if it be His pleasure, through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what has not before been written of any woman.' Milton's plea for delay, though more abstract, was in essence similar: 'Neither do I think it shame,' he says in his *Reason of Church Government*, 'to covenant with any knowing reader that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine, like that which flows from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the treacherous fury of a rhyming parasite; nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases; to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly art and affairs; till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them.'

As to the period severally employed by the two poets in maturing their conceptions, we know from Dante's own statement that the 'wonderful vision' which inspired the composition of the *Divine Comedy* appeared to him a year after the death of Beatrice, when he was twenty-six years old, that is to say in 1291. His poem was finished in 1319. Twenty-eight years elapsed between the time when it was first conceived and the time of its completion. Between the date of the publication of Milton's *Reason of Church Government* and the date of the publication of *Paradise Lost*, 1667, twenty-six years passed. Dante survived the completion of the *Divine Comedy* by two years: *Samson Agonistes*, the last of Milton's biblical creations, was published in 1671, and Milton died in 1674. We find then a remarkable similarity, not only in the lofty motive of conception, but also in the period of incubation given by each poet to his religious work, and in the interval that elapsed between the termination of that work and the poet's death.

The long period in their lives during which both Dante and Milton allowed their poetical genius to remain in a state of passive receptivity, exposing their imagination to the rays of light coming to them from the social influences of the world without, before attempting to reproduce their conceptions in an artistic form, affords a suggestive explanation of the characteristic features to be found severally in the styles of the *Divine Comedy* and of *Paradise Lost*. Macaulay explains the contrast in the form of these works almost exclusively by the differences in the characters of the two poets. 'It would be difficult, he says, 'to name two writers whose works have been more completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings.' This is in a sense true; but as Macaulay, in order to exalt Milton, proceeds to dwell on the pride and bitterness of Dante, as if these were the only qualities reflected in the *Divine Comedy*, he leaves on the mind of the reader an inadequate idea of the greatness and comprehensiveness of the Italian poem. He takes no notice of Dante's intense love for his native soil, expressed in his yearning in exile for his 'beautiful San Giovanni'; pays no heed to the passionate tenderness of his nature, as revealed in his meeting with Beatrice in Purgatory; calls no attention to his marvellous picture of the light, peace, and ecstasy of the life of the saints in Paradise. The truth is that the supreme value of these two great poems lies less in their particular and personal than in their universal character, and the measure of their success as works of art is to be found in the perfection of the form by means of which each of them produces an organic representation of all the contrary influences operating alike on his own nature and on the spirit of his age.

The *Divine Comedy*, as I have already said, is an exact and faithful mirror of European thought in the Middle Ages—by which term I mean the great period of society intervening between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the modern era, dating from the rise of the Balance of Power among the chief European nations. The difficulties in the expression of thought which Dante had to encounter arose partly from the opposing elements of race which struggled for mastery in the mediæval system, and partly from the absence of literary models which might guide him in constructing poetical forms for the vernacular speech. He was confronted by three great antagonistic forces in politics—the surviving municipal tradition of Roman government, the ecclesiastical order which had supervened upon that tradition, and the feudal institutions of the conquering barbarian races. All three of these influences find their proportioned place in

the scheme of the *Divine Comedy*—the strongest of them being, probably, the political theory of the Holy Roman Empire, which Dante makes the groundwork of his thought, alike in his treatise *De Monarchia* and in the idealism of the *Paradiso*. Almost equally powerful is the educational influence of the Scholastic Logic, which gives a characteristic form to all Dante's speculations about the physical and spiritual universe. Lastly, the lyrical motive in his poem springs out of the impulse of chivalrous Woman-worship, the main source of which lay in the feudal customs and institutions of the Teutonic races, and which, before the composition of the *Divine Comedy*, had found expression in the Knightly Romances, and in the social legislation of the Courts of Love. Round all these divergent modes of thought is diffused, in the *Divine Comedy*, an atmosphere of Allegory arising out of the Neo-Platonic philosophy, which from the beginning of the Christian era had deeply penetrated every system of theological teaching.

The *Divine Comedy* is far more deeply coloured with personal feeling than *Paradise Lost*. In the handling and treatment of the subject every detail reflects the intense individuality of Dante himself. He is the hero of his own epic; its action proceeds step by step with his progress through the three invisible worlds; his report of the system of things revealed to him in those worlds is a reflection of his actual experience in the world of sense. All this is perfectly natural. The form of expression used in the *Divine Comedy* is that which is best fitted to embody the sentiments of a Florentine citizen, whose affections are intensified and whose ideas are coloured by the concentration of interest within city walls. Hence spring the poetry and pathos, as well as the satirical indignation of Dante's local allusions. In the depths of Hell we find him speaking enthusiastically of his birthplace: 'On the beautiful river of Arno, in its great city, was I born and reared'; in Paradise 'the fount of his baptism' recurs to his memory; and his invective against the city that had sent him into exile is heightened as he calls up the image of his 'beautiful San Giovanni'. For the ideal framework of all these personal feelings, however, he is indebted to the historical beliefs of the society to which he belongs. The triple scene of his epic, Hell, Purgatory, Paradise, is no invention of his own: the form of the *Vita Nuova*, in which he records his passion for Beatrice, is suggested to him by the lyrics of the chivalrous Troubadours; and, on the other hand, the transformation of the real Beatrice into the abstract person of Theology is rendered intelligible by the scholastic use of Allegory,

as an instrument for the interpretation of Nature. The surpassing merit of the *Divine Comedy*, as a work of poetical art, consists not so much in the absolute originality of its invention, as in the skill with which the poet brings together a vast number of ideas and images from opposing quarters, and fuses them into a great system of philosophic thought.

In a different sense this too is true of the epic of Milton. In *Paradise Lost*, as well as in the *Divine Comedy*, we see the processes of a supreme imagination, procuring materials for its service from many distinct sources, Christian and Pagan, civil and feudal, classic and romantic, and blending them into a form of beautiful unity, representative of the spirit of thought and action in its own age. The contrast in the artistic result is striking, but it is exactly adapted to the change of circumstances, in the midst of which the later poem was composed. Dante was the poet of the Italian city, Milton of the English nation; Dante the representative of Catholic Unity, Milton of the Protestant Reformation: to Dante the true relations between Pagan antiquity and the Holy Roman Empire were unknown; Milton wrote at the height of the Classical Renaissance. In his day the Scholastic Philosophy had been abandoned alike by the reformers of religion and by the pioneers of experimental science; the idea of the physical universe presented by the astronomer Ptolemy had, among the more advanced reasoners of the age, been exchanged for the views of Copernicus and Galileo; the struggle between Liberty and Authority had passed from the narrow limits of the cities of Italy to the feudal aristocracy and the commercial classes of the northern nations; at the same time the allegorical method of interpreting and representing nature and society possessed, as may be seen from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, a very different measure of vitality from what was inherent in it when Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy*. If the scheme of Christian theology was to be presented in poetry, a different scale of treatment, another instrument of expression, were required. Milton remained long in uncertainty as to the form which his poem ought to assume. At first he thought of casting it into the dramatic mould, and had made some way in the construction of a kind of miracle play, suggested by the dramas of the Dutch Vondel and the Italian Andreini; and it was apparently only his artistic perception of the technical inadequacy of the drama for the vastness of his conceptions that made him eventually, with supreme judgement, adopt the form of the classical epic. By this resolve the character of *Paradise Lost* became necessarily much more impersonal than that of the *Divine Comedy*; the

action of Milton's poem depended not upon a private vision, involving views of contemporary life and action, but upon the recorded history of mankind ; the subject contains in itself beginning, middle, and end. The actors in the poem, instead of being persons known to the poet, are either the ancestors of the human race or the supernatural rulers of Heaven and Hell. The description of their actions and the record of their speeches stand in the place of Dante's account of his own progress through the spiritual world, and of his colloquies with the persons he saw there. Nevertheless, though the matter of the speeches in *Paradise Lost* is necessarily metaphysical, it is as dramatically consistent with the character of the different speakers as any of the discourses held by Dante with Ciacco, Francesca di Rimini, or Cacciaguida. There is nothing in the images employed by Milton which is necessarily 'discernible only to the initiated'; though neither in his case nor in Dante's can the meaning of the imagery be rightly understood without thought and study.

To attempt to award the superiority in poetical performance to Dante or Milton would be as idle as to compare the two systems of thought which they severally represent. Macaulay's judgement that Dante 'decidedly yields' to Milton in his treatment of supernatural beings ignores the totally different method of conception in the two poems. If Dante's angels are 'good men with wings'; if his 'devils are spiteful ugly executioners'; on the other hand it must be admitted that, in Milton's representation of Heaven, 'God the Father turns a school divine.' It is more profitable to observe how comprehensively each poet embodies in an ideal form the thought of his age. Dante had perhaps the simpler task to perform. The unquestioning dogmatic faith of the Middle Ages could be expressed in imagery with a symmetry and completeness not possible to the more intricate thought of modern civilization. Hence there reigns through the whole atmosphere of the *Divine Comedy* the same spirit of *naïveté* and ingenuousness that delights us in the pictures of Giotto and Fra Angelico. Milton, on the other hand, is entitled to the supreme praise of having, in the form of *Paradise Lost*, reconciled almost irreconcilably contrary principles of life and thought. Dante finds no difficulty in dealing with the incongruous imagery of Paganism and Christianity, because the fabulous nature of beings like Cerberus, Charon, and the Centaurs, is lost to him in the allegorical atmosphere through which he views them. But to Milton Greek mythology presents itself in direct antagonism to his monotheistic faith; to his essentially civic intelligence romantic legend offers the

repugnant image of feudal monarchy; even humanist literature moves him to the reflection:—

Their orators thou then extoll'st, as those
The top of eloquence, statists indeed
And lovers of their country, as may seem;
But herein to our Prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government
In their majestic unaffected style,
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.

Great indeed was that genius which, with religious views almost as extreme as those of Tertullian respecting the relations between classic literature and the Catholic faith, with a moral temper that could describe Sidney's *Arcadia* as 'a vain amatorious poem', was yet, without the slightest sacrifice of consistency, able to avail itself of pagan mythology and romantic fiction, as ornaments of an epic so essentially Christian in its structure as *Paradise Lost*. And it is on account of the grandly comprehensive humanity and the reconciling spirit of art which shine in his poetry, rather than of the bitter party eloquence of his treatises in prose, which Macaulay would exalt to an almost equal eminence, that the praises of posterity are gratefully and reverently offered to the immortal memory of Milton.



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Milton in the Eighteenth
Century (1701-1750)

By

Edward Dowden

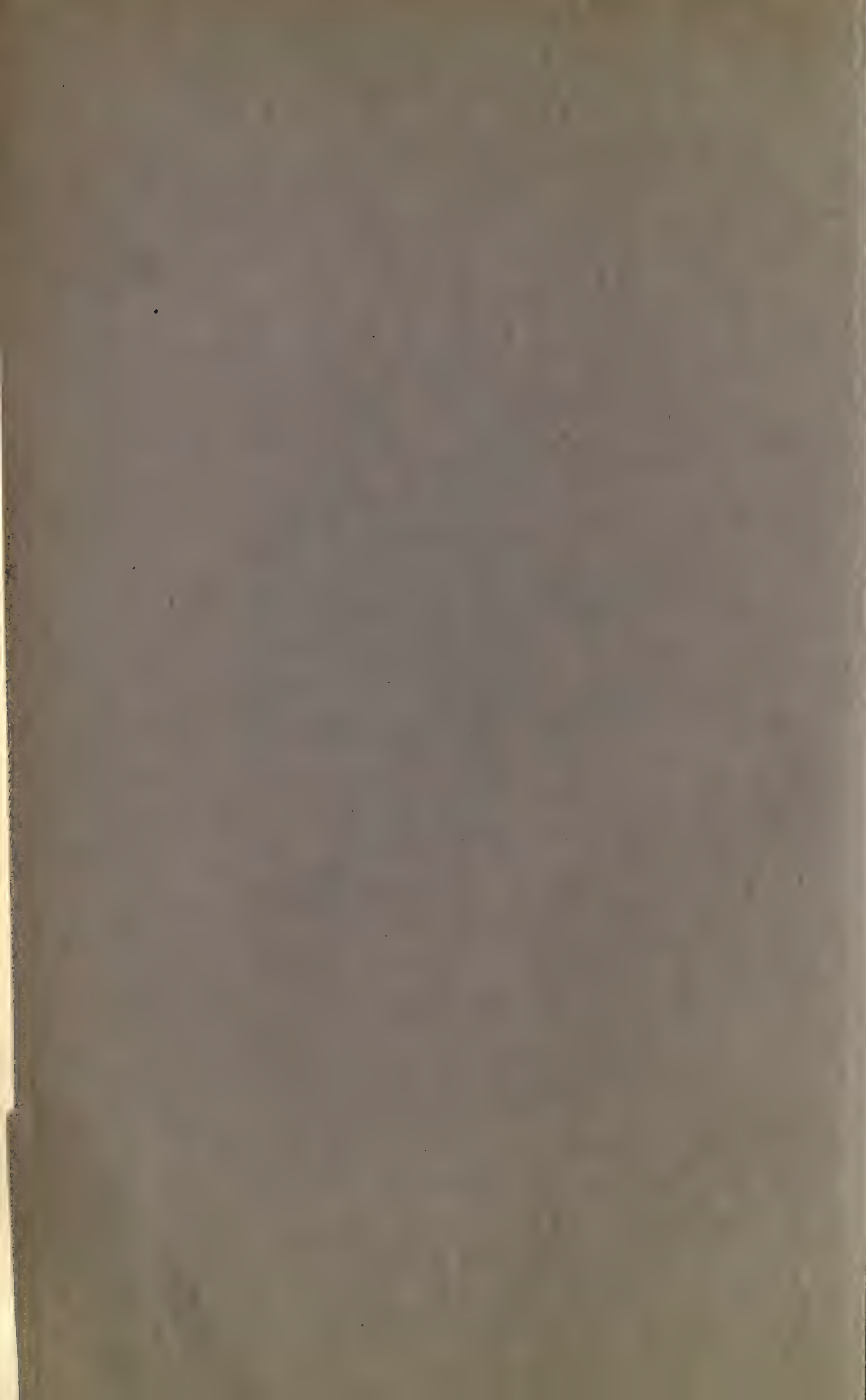
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MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (1701-1750)

By EDWARD DOWDEN

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THE influence of Milton on the literature of the eighteenth century was threefold—an influence on poetic style, independent in a great degree of poetic matter and therefore not wholly favourable to literature, during the first half of the century, felt in the main by writers who were not in a high sense original; secondly, an influence alike on sentiment and style, which formed one of the many affluents of the Romantic movement of the second half of the century, or, to be more exact, from about 1740 onwards; thirdly, an influence on thought, appearing at irregular intervals, but always associated with political liberalism or radicalism, from Birch and Benson and James Thomson to Hollis, Archdeacon Blackburne, and William Godwin in England, and to Mirabeau in France. The first of these modes of influence is chiefly connected with *Paradise Lost*, the second with Milton's earlier poems, the third with his prose writings.

Milton scholarship had more to do in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century, and, setting aside the work of David Masson on Milton's life, it did much more in the earlier than in the later period. The first critical study in detail of an English poem is probably that by Addison of *Paradise Lost*. The first variorum edition of an English poet is Newton's edition of Milton. Early texts were collated, the Cambridge manuscripts were examined, sources were investigated, conjectural emendations were proposed, explanatory notes and parallels from classical, English, and Italian writers were accumulated, points of punctuation and peculiar spelling were considered, a verbal index was compiled, the poet's versification was studied, by the successive scholars of the eighteenth century. When Todd's first edition appeared in 1801 the harvest had in great measure been garnered. Even the excursions and alarms connected with Bentley's castigation

of *Paradise Lost*, with Lauder's forgeries, with Peck's ascription to Milton of a translation of Buchanan's *Baptistes*, and with the harsher sentences of Johnson's life of the poet, indicate the interest which was felt in all that concerned him. And if Addison was occupied with Milton's greatest English poem in years not far from the opening of the century, Cowper was engaged upon his Latin poetry in years which drew towards its close. The notes made in this paper touch only on work of the years from 1701 to 1750.

By the opening of the eighteenth century the fame of the author of *Paradise Lost* was established. Six editions of that poem had been published; it had received a commentary from Patrick Hume and pictorial illustrations of folio size, not of high excellence, but in the taste of the time; it had been translated into German; it had been translated into Latin. The Minor Poems had appeared in at least three editions. The Prose Works—English and Latin—had been collected in stately volumes. Milton had been eulogized in prose and in verse by Dryden. Somers and Atterbury had promoted the publication of the folio *Paradise Lost*, for which there were no fewer than five hundred subscribers. The publisher, Tonson, afterwards declared that the volume 'was so well received, notwithstanding the price was four times greater than before, [that] the sale increased double the number every year'. Aubrey had collected notes relating to Milton's life; Anthony Wood had given him a place in the *Athenae*; a biography by Edward Phillips was prefixed to the *Letters of State* in 1694; a fuller biography by Toland was published in 1698; three and a half large pages were devoted to Milton—the adversary of Salmasius—by Bayle in his *Dictionary*; before long Milton was to take his place in a new edition of Morhof's *Polyhistor*. And it should be remembered that Milton's fame rose in spite of the hostility awakened in many quarters by his political and, to some extent, by his religious opinions. When Phillips printed for the first time in 1694 the sonnet to Cromwell, it was considered expedient to omit the line which tells of trophies reared on the neck of crowned Fortune. When the prose works were printed in London, it seemed the part of discretion to name 'Amsterdam' on the title-page. When, in 1692, *A Defence of the People of England* was translated and printed without a publisher's name, the anonymous publisher added the titles of a list of books useful to correct the impression left by Milton of 'so great a Prince and so glorious a Martyr as the late King Charles the First'. The author of *The Vision of Purgatory* in 1680 placed Milton in that uncomfortable region, where he is discovered in earnest discourse with a Provincial of the Jesuits. The author of *Remarks on Toland's Life of*

Milton is more angry with the biographer than with the subject of his biography, but already the title 'Socinian' as well as that of 'Republican' is connected with Milton's name. When Winstanley represents the fame of Milton as having gone out like a candle in snuff, he knows that this effect defective came by cause—Milton was 'a most notorious traitor, and most impiously and villainously belied the blessed martyr, King Charles the First'. Grudging praise is given to Milton by Langbaine in 1691: 'Had his principles been as good as his parts, he had been an excellent person', but when Gildon a few years later edits Langbaine's *Dramatick Poets* the note is changed; Milton is now 'an author of that excellence of genius and learning, that none of any age or nation, I think, has excel'd him'.

So the seventeenth century closed, and the eighteenth century opens with a writer too frequently forgotten in connexion with the criticism of Milton. Dennis—not Addison—leads the way. And Dennis's point of view is of considerable interest. Through him the study of Milton connects itself with that quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns in France, which constitutes a kind of prologue to the history throughout the eighteenth century of the idea of human progress, an idea playing no unimportant part in the thought of the period. Dennis deplored the low estate to which English poetry had fallen at the date of Dryden's death. It seemed to him contemptible as art, and he knew that poetry, especially dramatic poetry, had within recent years offended against morals by grossness of sentiment and obscenity of language. The artistic poverty and the ethical offence, Dennis thought, were not unconnected. But how should poetry be reformed? For some of the aesthetic aberrations an observance of 'the Rules' might be a remedy; the rules are only nature and reason methodized. But poetry of a high order springs from the passions; it is here that true reformation must begin. The deepest and the loftiest passions of our nature are those connected with religion. That reform and that advancement of poetry which Dennis desired were, he maintained, to be hoped for especially from the inspiring influence of religious feeling and a sacred theme. He remembered the warnings of Boileau against decorating with ornament 'the terrible mysteries of the Christian faith', his warnings against the 'criminal mixture' of poetic fiction with sacred truth; and undoubtedly it is a hard matter to contrive 'machines' for an epic poem on a Christian subject. But if Boileau meant more than this, he was an erring guide. Dennis admits that the ancient poets excelled the modern; they did so because, in the first place, observing the rules, they were true to nature, and, in the second, they took

advantage of the enthusiasm derived from religion. But there is no reason why the order of comparative excellence should not be reversed; the Pagan religions were false; the Christian religion is true; and no one can question that the inspiration which springs from truth is of a nobler kind than that communicated by falsehood. The fact is obvious to reason; but, in addition to this, it has been established by one majestic example—that of a modern poet who surpassed all the ancients and all the moderns—our English Milton. Having cited in support of his doctrine a passage from *Paradise Lost*, the critic breaks forth: ‘At the same time that the eye is ravishingly entertained, admiration is raised to a height and the reason is supremely satisfied.’

With these ardent words of John Dennis the criticism of Milton in the eighteenth century is introduced. They appear in his discourse on *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry*, published in 1701, and dedicated to one who was himself a reformer, Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave. Dennis hoped to follow this with a much larger treatise, a volume in folio, to be published by subscription under the title *A Criticism upon our most celebrated English Poets Deceas’d*. A Proposal, with a specimen of the work, was issued, Dennis choosing as his specimen ‘the substance of what will be said in the Beginning of the criticism of Mil-ton.’¹ Garth and others did something to obtain the half-guineas in advance from subscribers, to be followed by a second half-guinea on publication. The list includes some distinguished names, but the total number of persons who made the financial venture—some eighty and odd—did not seem to warrant the outlay necessary for a folio volume. During three months after the last subscription had come in Dennis worked on; then he lost heart, and printed in octavo (1704), with the Proposal and Specimen, a fragment of the great work, but a fragment in itself complete, entitled *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*. As in the earlier volume, so here he is concerned with the reformation and advancement of modern poetry, but he now distinguishes between the ‘Greater’ poetry, consisting of epic, tragedy, and the greater ode, and the ‘Less’, which includes comedy, the little ode, and satire. Milton, whose work belongs to the nobler order of poetry, is described as ‘one of the greatest and most daring Genius’s that has appeared in the World’; *Paradise Lost* is ‘the greatest poem that ever was written by Man’; the author ‘made his Country a glorious present of the most lofty, but most irregular, Poem that has been produc’d by the Mind of Man’. It is irregular because the superhuman theme

¹ I preserve the hyphened ‘Mil-ton’ of Dennis for Baconians, who have ascertained that ‘Shake-speare’ was a different person from the actor ‘Shakspeare’.

and superhuman characters do not permit an adherence to the rules of Aristotle, which rules Milton knew well and esteemed highly, but deliberately decided to disregard as inapplicable to his subject. It was not here that the poet's chief error lay; so long as he draws his enthusiasm from the highest religious conceptions he soars with no middle flight, and may soar free of the rules. But towards the close of the poem he descends from the wondrous works of God to tell, through the angel's speeches, and Adam's visions, of the works of corrupted man, from which could be derived no sort of enthusiasm; and least of all 'that admiration and terror which give the principal greatness and elevation to poetry'. It may be that when Philomela, whom unpoetical mortals knew then as Elizabeth Singer and afterwards as Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe, published her *Divine Hymns and Poems* in 1704, 'in imitation of Mr. Milton,' she was responding to the pleadings of Dennis in his earlier discourse. He was himself a contributor to her volume.

Addison's papers in *The Spectator* were written not because *Paradise Lost* was unknown, but rather because it was well enough known to make many readers wish to know it better. Those of us who watched the growth of Robert Browning's fame can remember that the time when editors of reviews and magazines were most desirous to obtain an appreciation (as it is called) or an interpretation was not when he was the peculiar possession of a few admirers, but when he was widely read, and yet read with an imperfect comprehension which rendered the question void of offence—Understandest thou what thou readest? Several years before the *Spectator* papers appeared, the author of *The English Theophrastus* represented the aspirant to wit and critical talent of that date as slighting Shakespeare, Jonson, and Dryden, but he is 'a great admirer of the incomparable Milton', and 'fondly endeavours to imitate his Sublime'. Addison does not argue the position, but assumes at the outset, as something granted, that 'the first place among our English poets is due to Milton'. He was not the writer to force anything upon a reluctant public in a paper which had become popular. His mode of procedure was somewhat tentative; he did not feel sure that he could sustain the interest of his readers during a long series of articles, and he announced that the series would close with the seventh number. His bookseller assured him that for these papers there was an 'unusual demand. In fact the Saturdays of more than four months—eighteen numbers—were devoted to *Paradise Lost*. Addison had the advantage over Dennis of being unencumbered with a theory; he could insinuate his feeling for the beauties of the poem by more persuasive touches. He differed

from his predecessor by finding that Milton had in the main observed the rules of epic poetry; but he agrees with Dennis in thinking that the poem flags in the narrative of the history of mankind towards its close. Undoubtedly Addison contributed much to the intelligent enjoyment of Milton by those who already were prepared to enjoy his poetry; every admirer could justify his admiration by the latest authority. In 1712 Leonard Welsted published his translation of Longinus on the Sublime. Addressing an unnamed friend, who like Addison was a lover of *Chevy Chase*, Welsted refers to the *Spectator* articles. 'It's undoubtedly true of Milton,' he writes, 'that no man ever had a genius so happily form'd for the Sublime. . . . When I view him thus, in his most exalted flights, piercing beyond the boundaries of the Universe, he appears to me as a vast Comet, that for want of room is ready to burst its Orb and grow eccentric.' Such enthusiasm did not now appear extravagant. But whether Addison's papers did much to widen the circle of Milton's readers in England remains uncertain. The pocket edition of *Paradise Lost*, published shortly before the appearance of the *Spectator* papers, was not succeeded by a new edition for eight years. Within the six years preceding Addison's criticism three editions had been published. Unless, however, we knew the number of copies in each edition, we could not draw a certain conclusion. Addison unquestionably, at a somewhat later date, influenced opinion in France, and prepared the way for translations which before very long were to make their appearance.

'English poetry,' writes Mr. Walter Raleigh, 'went Milton-mad during the earlier half of the eighteenth century.' He refers especially to the influence of Milton's blank verse and Milton's diction on certain poets from the author of *The Splendid Shilling* and *Cyder* onwards. The poetry of the second half of the century went Milton-mad under the influence of the minor poems, and in particular of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Thomas Warton, who edited with a learned devotion Milton's *Poems upon Several Occasions*, maintains that these were little known during the years from 1700 to about 1740. Addison commends *Comus* and mentions *L'Allegro*. Bentley in 1732 cites a line from *Comus*. But not a hemistich, says Warton, is quoted from any of Milton's earlier poems in the collections of those 'who digested the beauties or phrases of English poets from 1655 to 1738 inclusively'. Neither Bysshe, nor Gildon, nor Thomas Hayward in *The British Muse*, he declares, has quoted from those shorter pieces which he himself edited. Warton goes on to tell a story of his father, who once at Magdalen College mentioned in high terms

the volume of Milton's early poems to Digby, an intimate friend of Pope: 'Mr. Digby expressed much surprise that he had never heard Pope speak of them,' and, having questioned Pope as to whether he knew anything of this hidden treasure, he supposed that in this way Pope was led to discover them, for soon *Eloisa to Abelard* came forth (1717), and it was found to be 'sprinkled with epithets and phrases of a new form and sound, pilfered from *Comus* and the *Penseroso*'. Warton regarded it as a 'phenomenon' that Pope, 'a poet not of Milton's pedigree, should be their first copier'. Whatever we may think of Warton's story, it is certain that Pope was intimately acquainted with Milton's earlier poems long before the 'grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn' passed from *Comus* into *Eloisa to Abelard*. In the pastoral *Summer* rough satyrs dance as rough satyrs danced in *Lycidas*. In *Autumn* the 'lab'ring oxen' retreat in their 'loose traces' from the field as the 'laboured ox' of *Comus* came in his 'loose traces' from the furrow. In a variation of a line in the *Essay on Criticism* Phoebus touches trembling ears as he touched trembling ears in *Lycidas*. In *Windsor Forest* fields are 'crown'd with tufted trees' as in *L'Allegro* towers and battlements are bosomed high in 'tufted trees'. Again, in *Windsor Forest* 'sullen Mole' hides his diving flood as 'sullen Mole' in the *Vacation Exercise* ran underneath. In *The Messiah* Isaiah's 'hallowed lips' are 'touched with fire' as in the *Nativity* the altar is 'touched with hallowed fire'. In 1713 Tonson published the pocket edition of Milton's poems other than *Paradise Lost*, but they were easily attainable in the earlier octavo, and before this date Pope's pilferings had begun.

Pope, as Warton expresses it, is not of Milton's pedigree, and, though on occasions he borrows a phrase, he maintains his own manner with excellent discretion. He adopts a happy turn of language, but he does not yield to the influence of Milton's style. The error of Philips and other versifiers was to suppose that 'the numbers of Milton'—the words are Johnson's—'which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which at most can rise only to elegance'. The poetic diction of the eighteenth century, against which Wordsworth made his protest, is in large measure due, as Mr. Raleigh has shown, to the plastering of a Miltonic manner over themes with which it had no proper correspondence. 'The diction which Milton had invented for the rendering of his colossal imaginations was applied indifferently to all subjects—to apple-growing, sugar-boiling, the drainage of the Bedford level, the breeding of negroes, and the distempers of sheep.' Thomson in *The Seasons*

had a certain magnificence of his own ; but how often when his subject drops to a level does he endeavour to maintain a pomp of language. With the aid of Zippel's recent edition of *The Seasons* it is now easy to trace out his more particular and definite obligations to *Paradise Lost* and to Milton's earlier poems. Young's staccato blank verse was his own ; the theatric gestures, the start of histrionic surprise are peculiarly his ; yet in his choice of topics and in his way of imagining them he is often under Milton's sway, and not always to his advantage. But Pope was prudent, and stood instinctively on his guard against any influence which might confuse the law of the rimed couplet. The ripples of Canaletto belong to another realm of water than that of the live and shouldering surges of Turner's open sea. 'Milton's style,' observes Pope, as recorded in Spence's *Anecdotes*, 'is not natural ; 'tis an exotic style. As his subject lies a good deal out of our world, it has a particular propriety in those parts of the poem : and when he is on earth, when he is describing our parents in Paradise, you see he uses a more natural and easy way of writing. Though his formal style may fit the higher parts of his own poem, it does very ill for others who write on natural and pastoral subjects. Philips in his *Cyder* has succeeded extremely well in his imitation of it, but was quite wrong in endeavouring to imitate it on such a subject.' Pope knew his province and his place. In 1711 he told Caryll in a letter that he had the pictures of Dryden, Milton, and Shakespeare in his chamber that the constant remembrance of them might keep him humble. Whether they produced that desirable effect may be doubtful ; but he certainly did not aspire to be Shakespearean or Miltonic.

It is no part of the purpose of this paper to trace the growth of Milton's fame outside England. A branch of that subject is dealt with in Dr. J. Martin Telleen's thesis, *Milton dans la Littérature française*. But Voltaire was in England when he published his *Essay on Epic Poetry*, and in English the book is written. A line of research pursued with zeal to the close of the century—the investigation of Miltonic sources, and especially the sources of *Paradise Lost*—seems to have originated with Voltaire. Milton, he supposed, and stated as a fact, had seen at Florence a representation of the *Adamo* of Andreini, and while the youthful poet had perceived the absurdity of the Italian drama, he yet recognized the majesty of the subject. In the course of time a score of possible sources, ranging from the poems ascribed to Cædmon down to the *Adamo Caduto* of Serafino della Salandra, were named, and Lauder in his forgeries took advantage at a comparatively early date of the curiosity which had

been aroused. In his Introduction to *Paradise Lost*, Masson recites the names of many of these books which have been connected with Milton's epic, and dismisses the scholarship squandered in this field with the summary sentence: 'For the most part it is laborious nonsense'. From his enumeration he omits a work which seems to me to have a better claim for inclusion than many that are mentioned, the *Protoplastus* of Hieronymus Ziegler, which stands first among the Latin *Dramata Sacra*, published at Basel in 1547 under the editorship of Oporinus. Through Charles Diodati, and his uncle Dr. John Diodati, Milton had personal relations with Switzerland, where the book was published. He had himself made some stay at Geneva. He had contemplated many subjects from the Old Testament with a view to dramatic treatment, and such volumes as these—had he happened to see them—could not fail to interest him. Among the dramas here given is a *Samson*, and this also is by Ziegler. It was noticed by Lauder, in his research, partly genuine, partly fraudulent, for Milton's sources, that this Ziegler is mentioned by Milton's nephew, Edward Phillips, in his *Theatrum Poetarum*, as a writer of divers tragi-comedies and other dramatic pieces out of the Old and New Testaments; both *Protoplastus* and *Samson* are named by Phillips. There may be a portion of truth, though much exaggerated, in Lauder's supposition that Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum* is little more than an account of the poetical authors in his uncle's library. Lauder, however, with all his discoveries, failed to see a copy of the *Dramata Sacra*, nor does Todd—at least to the date of his second edition (1809)—appear to have been acquainted with those somewhat rare volumes, which yet were known to Edward Phillips. If Milton ever looked into Ziegler's Latin play he would have found there the whole story of the creation of man and woman, the machinations of Lucifer, Belial, and Satan, the celebration of God's works by Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, the temptation of Eve, the fall of our first parents, the expulsion from Paradise, and a recital of the long series of woes coming upon the earth, as assigned to the lips of a cherub in the closing scene. Lauder, had he come across the *Protoplastus*, might have made as good a case for Ziegler, among the authors whom Milton plundered, as he did for Ramsay or Masenius.

That Milton had read *Protoplastus* seems a not unreasonable conjecture. But however this may be, I venture to affirm with confidence—and perhaps what I shall say has been already pointed out—that one of the conjectured sources of *Paradise Lost*, commonly referred to as an original Italian drama, is no more than a translation or a rehandling of the *Protoplastus*. Joseph Cooper Walker, author of the *Historical*

Memoir on Italian Tragedy (1799), made William Hayley acquainted with 'a literary curiosity' which he obtained on a recent visit to Italy, *La Scena Tragica d' Adamo ed Eva*, by Troilo Lancetta (Venice, 1644). I have never had an opportunity of seeing Walker's literary curiosity, but Hayley gives an analysis of the play, scene by scene, which may be read in Todd's second edition of Milton's *Poetical Works* (vol. ii, pp. 236-8), and some quotations are made by Walker in the Appendix to his *Memoir on Italian Tragedy*. A comparison of these with Ziegler's Latin drama will leave no doubt on the mind of any student that Lancetta is little more than a translator. In Lancetta's address to the reader occurs a passage which Hayley fancied to have had the effect of turning Milton's mind from his original design of a dramatic treatment of the theme to the epic treatment actually adopted. In a dream Moses appears and assures the sleeper that from such a subject 'an heroic poem worthy of demi-gods' might be formed. This address to the reader is found only in Lancetta, but little reliance can be placed on the ingenious guess of Hayley.

Before Voltaire's *Essay on Epic Poetry* was published Fenton's edition of *Milton's Poems* had appeared, with a short life of the author (1725). Here *Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Lycidas* are justly honoured—'all written', says Fenton, 'in such exquisite strain that though Milton had left no other monument of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal.' Fenton undertook to revise the punctuation of the poems; as a fact he made a few emendations of the text, and perhaps overlooked a few printers' errors; he has been censured for 'ignorance, want of taste, and silly officiousness'. He ought rather to be commended for the exercise of considerable discretion. Monk, the biographer of Bentley, supposes that it was Fenton's example which led that great scholar to exercise his critical ingenuity in castigating the received text of *Paradise Lost*. To repeat a story told at length by Monk and briefly by Sir Richard Jebb would be a superfluity. On one important point the biographers of Bentley differ. Bentley, as is well known, directs not a few of his most disdainful comments against an imagined editor and reviser of the blind poet's work, who saw *Paradise Lost* through the press, altered it at his pleasure, and adorned it with various purple patches of his own nonsense or pretentious, schoolboy learning. Monk suggests that, without seriously attempting to impose on the public, Bentley manufactured this man of straw, awkwardly enough, as a device to take off the odium incurred by his frequent condemnation or alteration in margin or footnotes of the words of the poet. Thus

it was not Milton whom Bentley assailed with scornful criticism, but the unknown editor, fraudulent, ignorant, devoid of judgement and of taste. Jebb, on the contrary, quoting from Bentley's Preface a passage which he supposes, on slender grounds, to negative this opinion, declares his conviction that the theory of the fraudulent editor was broached by Bentley in perfect good faith. Neither biographer notices the fact that from the first it had been conjectured that Bentley's man of straw was but a politic device. And, indeed, from an early date it was asserted that Bentley had himself admitted that he did not really credit the theory which he had set forth. Johnson in his *Life of Milton* gives his decision in magisterial fashion against Bentley and his theory: 'a supposition rash and groundless, if he thought it true; and vile and pernicious, if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.' These words were written some forty-five years after the publication of Bentley's *Paradise Lost*. But nearly thirty years earlier Johnson had rashly supplied Lauder with a preface and a postscript to his *Essay on Milton's use and imitation of the Moderns* (1750), and there Lauder asserted not only that Bentley's phantom or persona of an editor was 'a mere chimaera', but that the doctor himself well knew the thing to be impossible, which he 'scrupled not to acknowledge on proper occasions'. We can go still further back in search for the origin of Monk's hypothesis. Bentley's quarto was published by Tonson in 1732. Several numbers of *The Grub Street Journal*, with which Pope was closely connected, in the course of that year, are in part devoted to the defence of Milton, or rather to the more congenial task of belabouring the person of the aged, but still alert and combative, Master of Trinity. In the number for May 25, a vigorous opponent, signing himself 'A. Z.', comes forward with two letters written during the preceding month. In one of these the writer challenges the statement of Bentley that his notes were 'made *extempore*, and put to the press as soon as made'. A. Z. had learnt from a gentleman, who was ready, if called on, to attest the truth of what he stated with his name, that six years previously—in other words, shortly after the publication of Fenton's edition—Bentley's friend Ashenhurst declared at Bristol that the Doctor was then engaged in making notes on Milton; neither did he speak of it as a work just then taken in hand. Mitford in the Advertisement of his edition of *Milton's Poetical Works* (1834) informs us that he was in possession of the copy of Tonson's *Paradise Lost* used by Bentley for the purpose of recording his emendations and conjectures, and that the corrections published by Bentley, which number over eight hundred, are only a selection from a much larger mass remaining upon the

margin of that copy. It may be that Bentley worked during several years at a leisurely pace, and ultimately dictated the final form of his notes in haste, for the troubles in connexion with the Mastership of Trinity were urgent, and the later books of his *Paradise Lost* give indications of a hurry upon his spirits. In his second communication to *The Grub Street Journal* A. Z. considers the question of Bentley's sincerity and good faith. He lays aside the notion that Bentley was setting a trap to ensnare others into a belief in what he knew himself to be false; nor can he suppose that the Doctor doatingly takes his own dreams and fancies for realities. Discovering something like a parallel in Bentley's attribution to Dr. Colbatch, whom he wanted to pelt with mud, of a work known to be written by Middleton, A. Z. proceeds: 'Dr. Bentley knew it would be very impolitic to exercise this talent [his talent for abuse] against Milton; and therefore [he] conjures up this apparition of an editor (or by the help of a strong imagination persuades himself that there indeed was such an one) whom he may brand with scurrilous names at pleasure, give vent to his spleen, and raise the indignation of no man.'

No one who has examined Bentley's work with care can suppose that he was merely concerned to recover what Milton wrote. In some instances his conjectures go at least upon legitimate lines. They may be bad, or they may be needless, but in method they belong to the same species as legitimate corrections. For example, when in Book VII for Milton's

And Earth be chang'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One Kingdom, Joy and Union without end,

Bentley proposes to read—

And Earth be chain'd to Heav'n, and Heav'n to Earth,
One Kingdom, join'd in Union without end,

we reject the proposed reading, but it is conceivable that *chained*, if dictated by the blind poet, might have been erroneously heard as *changed*, and again that *joined* might have been set down by the scribe as *Joy and*, so determining the printed text. But there are scores and hundreds of instances where Bentley's proposals can mean nothing except that he himself could write more correctly than Milton. The critic wholly reconstructs the original to suit his better judgement, omits a line or passage because he disapproves it, or adds a line because he imagines that such an addition is an advantage to the poem. He honoured the genius of Milton, but he believed that Milton was often deficient in clarity and precision of intellect, in the exact logic of poetic thought, and in that delicacy of

ear which refuses to tolerate a harshness or obstruction when difficulties in sound by a little skill can easily be smoothed away. Bentley's response to the suggestion of Queen Caroline should be a reformed *Paradise Lost*, not merely as Milton *did* write the poem in certain passages, but also as he *ought* to have written it in many others. Perhaps, as he proceeded with his task, the notion of a dishonest reviser and editor of the poem occurred to him, and that in the end he persuaded himself that the creature of his imagination might have existed. But his design is wider in scope than the correction of errors of the press, wider in scope even than the exhibition of his supposed editor's misdoings. The design is nothing less than to show how *Paradise Lost* must have been written had Milton the advantage of an eighteenth-century Aristarchus at his elbow. A comparison of Bentley's annotations with the replies in detail of Zachary Pearce is instructive in its disclosure of the ways in which the intellect—intellect of various degrees of fineness and flexibility—deals with work of the imagination. Pearce, like Bentley, is a critic of his own time, but his judgements are surer than Bentley's, partly because he has the grace of modesty, and partly because they do not always rest upon data furnished by the intellect alone.

Sir Richard Jebb pointed to one proposal of Bentley's as the sole emendation likely to be what Milton actually wrote, and at the same time certainly what he ought to have written. From the gash inflicted on Satan by the sword of Michael issues (Book VI, l. 332) a stream of 'nectarous humour'. 'An odious blunder!' cries Bentley, 'whether the printer's or the editor's hard to conjecture.' Read, therefore, as Milton gave it, 'ichorous humour'. In several instances, as where he would substitute *its* for *his*, the errors of Bentley arise from his ignorance of the history of the English language. It seems, if we may draw a conclusion from the examples given in the *New English Dictionary*, to have been left to Hobbes in 1676—a date after Milton's death—to use *ichor* for the first time in the sense of the ethereal juice which flows in the veins of the gods. When Diomedes wounds Venus in the fifth book of the *Iliad*, Chapman does not venture to anglicize the Greek *ichor*; immortal blood flows from the wound. The word *ichor* in Milton's time would seem to have been used only in a special physiological or pathological sense; it was, we may venture to think, a scientific, not a poetical, word. Neither *ichor* nor *ichorous* is anywhere to be found in Milton's *Poetical Works*. But *nectar* and the adjective *nectared* are words which he had used from an early date; the head of the Fair Infant who had died of a cough is a 'nectared head'; Lycidas laves his oozy locks with

nectar; in *Paradise Lost* brooks run nectar, vines yield nectar. To introduce into Milton's text a word which he never uses, and which perhaps was never used by an English writer until after the publication of *Paradise Lost* in the sense required, were indeed rash; and it is somewhat suggestive of the risks attending conjectural emendation to note that the adjective *nectarous*, which our great classical scholars Bentley and Jebb would displace, is a word so Miltonic that perhaps to him it may owe its origin. No earlier example is cited in the *New English Dictionary* than the 'nectarous draughts' of the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*.

The few instances in which Bentley established the true text of Milton, or suggested a highly probable reading, escaped the notice of Jebb among the eight hundred and odd proposals of that rash and presumptuous—yet intellectually acute—critic. It did not require eminent genius to notice that in B. vii, l. 451, 'Let th' Earth bring forth Fowle living in her kind' the printer had mistaken a long *s* for an *f* in his manuscript, and that Milton's word was *soul*, not *fowl*; but the error had been repeated in a series of editions and was not corrected until 1732. The handsome quarto has, therefore, certainly served Milton scholarship to the extent of a single letter. In the same seventh book, l. 321, Bentley's conjecture 'the swelling gourd' for the previous 'smelling gourd' has found some favour with editors and critics. It was approved by Upton in his *Critical Observations on Shakespeare*; Keightley introduced it into his text; Masson rejects it, but so cautious and judicious a scholar as Dr. W. Aldis Wright reads with Bentley (and the Capell MS.) 'the swelling gourd'. Bentley should also be given credit for reading *hither* in place of *thither* in B. xi, l. 344, though here he is only reverting unawares to the earlier text which had been corrupted in the edition of 1705. If all were collected from Bentley's notes that can be regarded as having value for the student of Milton only a few grains of wheat would lie in the hollow of the hand. And yet the spectacle of the great scholar confidently and joyously engaged in his labour of destruction which he supposed to be a labour of reformation, while compassed round with the infirmities of seventy years, and exposed to the assaults of his adversaries—his mind, as he expresses it, 'shaking off all outward uneasinesses, and involving itself, secure and pleased, in its own integrity and entertainment'—this spectacle is inspiring, and reminds us of another combatant who bated not a jot of heart or hope, but still bore up and steered right onward.

As editor of *Paradise Lost* the old man became the object for many insults and mockeries. But his most accomplished and most effective

antagonist, Zachary Pearce, who followed him from line to line in a volume wholly devoted to a review of his edition, was hardly less courteous than he was patient. Jonathan Richardson, though Bentley was often in his mind as he brought to a conclusion his *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Paradise Lost*, abstains, I think, from mentioning Bentley's name. Richardson, when his volume appeared, was little short of Bentley's age when, two years previously, he had published his quarto. He had loved and honoured Milton from the days of his youth. His bent for portrait-painting had led him at an early age to become a pupil of Riley. He cared for poetry only less than he cared for painting, and above all other poets he esteemed Shakespeare, Dryden, and Cowley. In Riley's studio he happened to find a copy of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, and, in his own phrase, 'was dazzled with it'. 'From that hour,' he writes, 'all the rest faded in my estimation, or vanished.' The fruit of his studies appeared about half a century later, and while what is best worth preserving in the notes has been incorporated in the editions of Newton and Todd, the Introduction, which consists of more than 180 pages, will always have an importance of its own, for Richardson gathered recollections of Milton from those who had personal acquaintance with him and recorded these with affectionate reverence. He associates on the title-page the name of his son, who was also a portrait-painter, with his own. The elder Richardson was not a classical scholar; his time of learning was employed, he says, in business; and then with an outbreak of paternal affection he adds: 'But after all I have the Greek and Latin tongues, I have them because a part of me possesses them, to whom I can recur at pleasure, just as I have a hand when I write or paint, feet to walk, and eyes to see. My son is my learning, as I am that to him which he has not; we make one man.' Richardson was perhaps the first to comment intelligently on Milton's peculiarities of spelling, *thir* for *their*, *mee* for *me*, when emphasis is required, and others; his care is evinced by the fact that he notices the existence of some differences of text in different copies of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*. He indulged a fancy of his own for beginning a sentence or a paragraph without the usual capital letter, when the first word was unemphatic, and sometimes he followed Milton's example in doubling the final *e*; thus on p. cxxxiv the unemphatic *we* and the emphatic *Wee* may both be found. The portrait of Milton prefixed as a frontispiece to Richardson's volume is worthy of notice; it is his rehandling of a crayon drawing, doubtfully ascribed to Faithorne, but not identical with the drawing from which the portrait in *The History of Britain* (1670) was engraved. This crayon, which passed into Tonson's possession,

was photographed in 1861 by permission of Mr. Baker, of Bayfordbury, Herts, for Sotheby's *Ramblings in Elucidation of the autograph of Milton*. It will be remembered that De Quincey considered that the frontispiece of Richardson's volume might serve as an admirable portrait of Wordsworth, an opinion emphatically negated in my hearing by Wordsworth's friend, Robert Perceval Graves. Richardson endeavoured to add vigour to his original, and placed a laurel wreath upon the hair; 'all the world,' he says, 'has given it to Milton long since.' The crayon drawing then in Richardson's possession disputes with the lost original of the 1670 engraving the claim to have been the likeness which drew forth from Milton's daughter Dorothy the exclamation 'Tis my father! 'tis my dear father! I see him! 'tis the very man!' I may add that I possess two pencil drawings on vellum by Jonathan Richardson, of which one, dated 1734, the year in which he published his *Explanatory Notes*, is evidently from the crayon drawing; it has the advantage of hair uncrowned; the other, dated 1737, is a profile—possibly an attempt to imagine Milton's face as presented in the crayon from a wholly different point of view. As the work of a skilled and conscientious artist interested in his subject, the experiment is not without value.¹

It was from Richardson's drawing that Vertue engraved the bust which appears in the first volume of Birch's edition of the *Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous Works of Milton*, published in two folio volumes in 1738. The arrangement of the works by Birch aims at being chronological. Birch includes *Concerning the reasons of the War with Spain*, which Toland had omitted, and he adds certain pages—the authenticity of which has been questioned—to the *History of Britain*; these pages, supposed by Birch to have been excised by the licencer, were perhaps omitted, as irrelevant, by Milton himself. His account of Milton's Life adds some particulars to what had previously been known; he examined the Cambridge manuscripts, and recorded many of their various readings; and his notes upon the growth of Milton's fame in England and on the Continent are fuller than any preceding treatment of the subject. He for the first time printed those remarkable lines beginning 'Fair mirror of foul times', alleged to have been written at Chalfont during the plague—lines which, if not by Milton, have caught the movement of his verse in a remarkable degree. Birch's objection to their authenticity—that the choice of war, pestilence, or famine is said to have been offered to

¹ Dr. G. C. Williamson informs me that one of these is the original drawing for the engraving No. 117, and the other that for No. 190 of his large paper catalogue of Portraits, &c., of Milton, 1908.

David in connexion with his 'sin for the fair Hittite' instead of with his numbering of the army—is somewhat lightly set aside by Masson in his *Life of Milton*; but there is force in the objection, for in *Paradise Regained* (B. III. l. 410) the poet shows that he was not forgetful of this passage of the Old Testament.

Birch's bulky folios were not of a nature to add much to the popularity of Milton. But a Miltonic enthusiasm was in the air. In the preceding year Mr. Auditor Benson erected a monument to Milton in Westminster Abbey; he produced a Milton medal, employed Rysbrack to make two busts, and gave £1,000 to William Dobson for a translation of *Paradise Lost* into Latin verse. Two years after the publication of Birch's Prose Works appeared (1740) the quarto volume *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr. John Milton*, by Francis Peck, described by Masson as a 'silly medley of odds and ends', a volume adorned with a finely engraved pseudo-portrait, and containing the curious pseudo-Miltonic translation of Buchanan's *Baptistes*, yet, notwithstanding its silliness, not without some value for those who will take the pains to turn over its pages. *Baptistes*, laughed at by Warburton, was accepted as genuine by William Lauder. The anonymous essay on *Milton's Imitation of the Ancients* followed in 1741; in the same year was published *A verbal Index to Paradise Lost*, and Paterson's *Complete Commentary* on that poem was issued in 1744. As yet Milton's early poems had received comparatively little attention; they waited in a half obscurity to obtain due recognition from the Romantic revival. But in the year of Birch's folios, 1738, the way was prepared for a popular reception of this part of Milton's work by the presentation on the Drury Lane stage of Dr. Dalton's version of *Comus*, with added characters, added speeches, and songs set to the charming music of Dr. Arne. It seems not improbable that the success of Arne's music led Handel two years later to set to music the arrangement by Charles Jennens of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Handel's *Samson*—composed at an earlier date—was performed in 1743. Dalton's *Comus* should be judged with reference to the purpose at which it aimed; the *Mask*, as written by Milton, might please an audience fit, though few; it could not be a popular success. But a popular success *Comus* was, and the public reputation of Milton owes something to the acting of Quin and, at a later date, of Henderson, to the voice of Kitty Clive, and afterwards to that of Ann Catley. Though some of the songs are trivial, and some are modish, Dalton's work is not without a certain skill and ingenuity. A second Attendant Spirit supports the Lady as the first guides and encourages the brothers; the crew of the enchanter bustles

with male and female singers. Comus opens the third act with lines from *L'Allegro* invoking Euphrosyne, and presently the goddess fair and free, or rather a nymph who represents her, enters singing of

Pulses beating, bosoms burning,
Bosoms with warm wishes panting,
Words to speak those wishes wanting,

and more in the like amorous strain. A pastoral nymph, with a melancholy and despondent air, tells in a musical ballad, how she seeks in vain for Damon. And the spectators are presently gratified with a slow dance 'expressive of the passions of love'. Queen Caroline had befriended Milton's daughter; Dr. Johnson befriended his granddaughter by contributing a Prologue to *Comus*, spoken by Garrick, when in 1750 it was acted for her benefit at Drury Lane:—

What though she shine with no Miltonian fire,
No fav'ring Muse her morning dreams inspire;
Yet softer claims the melting heart engage,
Her youth laborious, and her blameless age;
Hers the mild merits of domestic life,
The patient sufferer and the faithful wife.

Quin's rendering of the part of Comus at the earlier presentation of the play was distinguished by something that seemed to the spectators like superhuman dignity and grace. 'With what a superior greatness,' cries a critic, 'does he introduce himself to us by his manner of delivering the glorious lines that open his part:—

The star that bids the shepherd fold,
Now the top of heaven doth hold.'

He courted the lady as a superior, as a deity condescending to a mortal. The enthusiastic critic goes on to affirm that 'if anything claims the title of being the greatest sentence, and most nobly pronounced of any on the English theatre, it is that threat of Comus to the lady, where, on her offering to get up to leave him, he tells her,

Nay, lady, sit—if I but wave this wand
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaster,
And you a statue; or as Daphne was,
Root-bound, who fled Apollo.'

The *Mask*, as Milton named it, and as it is usually named previous to 1738, came perhaps to be commonly known as *Comus* after its presentation with that title on the stage. In 1773 it was abridged by the elder Colman, and in this form was presented as an after-piece.

The half-century with which the notes in this paper are concerned

closed with the controversy aroused by William Lauder's impudent *Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns*, while Newton's great edition of the Poetical Works (1749-52) lies exactly on this side and on that of the year 1751, and sums up the labours of more than fifty years of study. The story of Lauder, his real services to Milton scholarship, his audacious forgeries, his exposure and his confession, is too long to be told here.

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Samson Agonistes and the Hellenic Drama

By

The late Sir R. C. Jebb, O.M.

Fellow of the Academy

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SAMSON AGONISTES AND THE HELLENIC DRAMA

BY THE LATE SIR R. C. JEBB, O.M.
(FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY)

Read December 10, 1908

I

Samson Agonistes may fairly be called classical both in language and in structure. The language has throughout elevation and temperate dignity, resembling that of *Paradise Lost*, but colder, and with fewer bursts of great eloquence. The structure fails only in one point, the metre of the choruses. The lyrical beauty of the choral odes in a Greek tragedy depended much on their division into corresponding parts, the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode. It is the balance and symmetry of these strophic movements to which the regular grace of the choruses is chiefly due. Milton here has freed himself from the restraint of strophe and antistrophe, and the measures of his Chorus are entirely arbitrary. This very irregularity has, it is true, a certain grandeur, but is not the grandeur proper to a tragedy on the Greek model; it is rather the sublimity of some of the bursts of eloquence in the Hebrew prophets.¹

Another criticism, upon the structure of the drama, is offered by Johnson—that the action of the drama makes no continuous progress from the beginning to the end. The opening is fine; the catastrophe is just; but there is no dramatic progress. This criticism appears to me far too strongly expressed. The *Samson Agonistes* falls into five Acts:—

1. Act i, 1–325:
Samson and the Chorus.
2. Act ii, 326–731:
Samson and Manoah.
3. Act iii, 732–1060:
Samson and Dalila.
4. Act iv, 1061–1299:
Samson and Harapha.
5. Act v, 1300–1758:
Samson and the Philistines.

¹ See, for instance, the last choral song, vv. 1660–1707.

Is it true that, as Dr. Johnson declares, after the point at which Manoah informs Samson of the feast to Dagon (vv. 433-47), no incident which advances the plot occurs until the catastrophe?

The catastrophe, let it be observed, consists in Samson deliberately pulling down the temple of Dagon on his own head and those of the spectators. Samson's will is the agent of the catastrophe. Everything, therefore, which helps to determine Samson's will and to define his purpose leads to the catastrophe.

Now (a) the last part of Act ii, vv. 606-731, cannot from this point of view be thought, as Johnson thinks it, idle. In that passage Samson expresses his resolution to die—a resolution fixed in him by the tidings just brought by Manoah of the honour to Dagon and the consequent dishonour to God, resulting from Samson's own weakness. He tells his father that he must not propose to seek his release. Thus the issue is so far narrowed; we see that one way of escape is closed; Samson will not allow himself to be ransomed.

But perhaps Dalila in her remorse will intercede for him, and he will be extricated in that way? The third Act brings Dalila on the scene, and at once she proffers her good offices (vv. 743-7).

It is now clear that Samson will accept no kind of mediation, and that he will die in captivity, either worn out by sorrow or in some great agony, which his treatment of the Philistines may hasten or delay. At this moment the giant Harapha enters, and to his insults Samson replies with defiance. As he leaves the scene the Chorus say:

He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to afflict thee.

Thus all is at last ready. Samson, crushed by despair and shame for himself and Israel, has rejected the proposal of Manoah to treat for his release; has made the intercession of Dalila impossible; finally, by bitter defiance of Harapha, has prepared for himself some crowning ignominy at the hands of his captors.

Surely, then, it cannot be said, as Dr. Johnson says, that the action of the drama makes no progress between the opening and the close. The action is, indeed, a still action, because the force which is to produce the catastrophe is the inward force of Samson's own despair, not an external necessity pressing upon him. Precisely the same is the case in the *Prometheus Vincit* of Aeschylus, a drama consisting, like *Samson Agonistes*, of a series of interviews.

II

A more interesting inquiry than any regarding the form of the *Samson Agonistes* is that regarding its spirit. Granting it to be in diction and in structure representative of that Greek drama which was its model, how far, we ask, is it animated by the spirit, by the dominant idea, of its original? This point appears to have been too little considered by the critics of Milton's great poem; and it is to this point especially that I wish to direct attention.

Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his essay entitled 'Culture and Anarchy', has made the terms Hebraism and Hellenism familiar as designating two opposed, or at least widely divergent, moral habits. Hebraism, as used by him, means the tendency to energetic action under the pressure and control of strict conscience. Hellenism denotes the desire to appreciate justly in the light of a free consciousness. The Hebrew acts strongly with an earnest faith. The Hellene thinks, and then acts in temperate obedience to his thought. The characteristic of Hebraism is direct intensity. The characteristic of Hellenism is flexible intelligence. The Hebrew has force, the Hellene has light.

I am not proposing now to broach the question whether the terms Hebraism and Hellenism accurately or completely express a fundamental antithesis between two permanent types of human activity. But these terms, in a narrower and stricter acceptation, form the contrast which immediately concerns us here.

Milton's mind was, in the literal and proper sense, Hebraic. Among those things which Hebrews have always believed and felt most strongly, and by believing and feeling which they have been characterized, are these:—(1) that God is the personal head, the immediate King, the very leader in battle, of His servants; (2) that the Hebrew people are, in a special sense, His *chosen* servants; a peculiar people, chosen by Him from other peoples; (3) that, as the interpreters of His will to His chosen servants, He from time to time selects men whom He directly and specially inspires, and who become what we denote by the Greek word *προφῆται*—i. e. *speakers forth, utterers* of His will.

Now, Milton habitually thought of the English people as holding the same place under the New Covenant which the Hebrews had held under the Old Covenant. He regarded them as a peculiar nation, selected by God to proclaim to the modern world the purest form of

Faith, as the Hebrews had been chosen to declare to the old world the highest form of Law.¹

He compares the English Commonwealth to the Hebrew Theocracy. In adopting that form of government, he says, the people chosen by God under the New Covenant have resolved to have for their one Supreme Ruler no other than God Himself. Men endued with great gifts are now, as of old, His prophets. From his early youth Milton's genius had that which is seldom separate from genius—a certain still consciousness of itself; and from his early youth this consciousness was solemn—joined to a sense that these powers were destined to be employed in the ministry of a government whose Head was God Himself; that he was, in his place and time, to be an interpreter to England of the best things imparted to him—that he was to be a prophet.

When a man with this bent of thought selected as the subject for a poem an episode of Hebrew history, the treatment of the subject was sure to be genuinely Hebraic. It would be needless to point out how, or how thoroughly, the spirit of the *Samson Agonistes* is the spirit of Hebraism. Samson is the champion of the Israelites against the Philistines. Jehovah is the God of the Israelites; Dagon is the protecting deity of the Philistines. Samson, through disloyalty to himself, has been permitted to fall into the hand of the idolaters; and Israel shares in his humiliation. Yet, even in this abasement, Samson is confident that the Lord of Hosts will finally assert His own majesty against the idol. This confidence is justified: the honour of the true God and of His chosen people are vindicated by the catastrophe which punishes the weakness, as it closes the penance, of His individual minister. This is the issue of the drama—Jehovah has prevailed over Dagon; Israel is avenged on Philistia.

Is this tragedy Hellenic in its spirit? If the names were changed—if the supernatural and the mortal agents were different—would it be possible to conceive this subject thus treated by Aeschylus, by Sophocles, or by Euripides?

The first characteristic of Hellenic tragedy in the hands of its greatest masters was an ideal grandeur of agony depending on a real grandeur of contrast. The contrast was between man and fate. The

¹ *Areopagitica*: 'God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in His Church . . . what does He then but reveal Himself to His servants, and, as His manner is, first to His Englishmen?'

Doct. and Disc. of Divorce: 'It would not be the first or second time since our Ancient Druides . . . that England hath had this honour vouchsafed from heaven to give out Reformation to the world.' Cf. the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*.

subject of Greek tragedy in all its forms, in all the fables over which it ranged, was the conflict between free will and destiny, between an absolute inward liberty and an inexorable external necessity. The gods themselves are subordinate to fate, either as administrators or as rebels; and the question so often asked, what is the source of imaginative pleasure in tragedy? is thus answered by Hellenic tragedy: it is the sense, on the one hand, of the heroic in man; on the other hand, of a superhuman controlling power.

It would not be difficult to select from the dramatic poetry of Greece passages which would interpret this statement. But there is one which, though limited in its scope, is, perhaps, better suited to the purpose than any other single passage. In his tragedy *Eumenides* Aeschylus has put into the mouth of the Furies themselves the theory of that government which, as the executants of the Fates' darkest decrees, they exercise over the whole human race. The Furies are not the Fates; but they are their most potent and most certain ministers; and the sublime Chorus in which they describe the sway committed to them is no imperfect expression of the deepest religious feeling of the ancient Greeks.¹

Hellenism contrasts man with fate. Hebraism contrasts God and His servants with idols and their servants. The difference will be best illustrated if the Hebrew personification of strength is compared with the Hellenic personification of strength; if Samson and his destiny are compared with Herakles and his destiny. It may be proper to inquire at the commencement—how far is the parallel just? What are the points of analogy between the history of Samson and the legend of Herakles? For convenience, I will speak of Herakles, a Hellenic idea, as if he was no less actual than Samson, a Hebrew fact.

They may be described as analogies of epoch; of mission; of temperament; of sufferings; of death.

Of epoch. Each was a strong man in a rude age—an age of widely-spread physical violence and fierce passions; an age of spasmodic efforts.

Of mission. Each was a deliverer. Samson was the champion, immediately, of his own tribe, the tribe of Dan, against the Philistines—who were straitening them in their already narrow borders between the mountains and the sea—and thereby of all Israel; Herakles, as he is himself made to say, 'ridding the earth of plagues, vexed his soul on the sea and in all forests.'

Of temperament. In his lectures on the Jewish Church Dean Stanley has well brought out the 'rough humour' which is a

¹ *Eumenides*, vv. 306–80.

leading characteristic of Samson. 'As a peal of hearty laughter breaks in upon the despondency of individual sorrow, so the joviality of Samson becomes a pledge of the revival of the greatness of his nation.' Precisely this quality is prominent in the Greek Herakles; and no one will forget the interpretation of this trait in Browning's *Balaustion*.

Of sufferings. Each becomes a thrall; and the most bitter thralldom of each is due to misplaced affection. Herakles is the slave of Omphale and the victim of Deianeira, as Samson was plotted against by his first wife, and successfully betrayed by Dalila.

Of death. Each passed away in agony—Herakles on Oeta; Samson in the temple at Gaza.

Such are some of the principal points of analogy between Herakles and Samson; and the analogy appears sufficient to justify a general comparison of poems which concern the two heroes.

The central idea of Samson's history, and, in harmony with that history, the central idea of Milton's poem, is the idea of a national champion, first victorious, then abased, then finally triumphant in a national cause. The feeling uppermost in Samson's mind is this—that the strength entrusted to him for the honour of God and of Israel has, through his own weakness, been betrayed and crushed; and that the great cause which he was commissioned to uphold has thereby been dishonoured. When Samson has perished in the temple of Dagon it is Manoah's comfort that this stain has been effaced (vv. 448-71, 1669-1720).

The central idea of the story of Herakles is that of a champion of the whole human race, persecuted throughout his mortal life by a cruel destiny. In his supreme agony—when the robe anointed by the unsuspecting Deianeira with the poisoned blood of the Centaur Nessus is burning into his flesh, as he writhes in his torment by the altar at Cenaeum, whence he is borne to his fiery death on Mount Oeta—his foremost thought is this, that the strength which had been used for all mankind has been overcome by an unworthy adversary through the working of destiny. Samson in his death triumphs over the Philistines; Herakles in his last agony is the victim of fate.¹

¹ *Trach.*, vv. 1046-63:

Ah me, whose hands and shoulders have been tried
In many a burning trial! Not the hate
Of Hera, not Eurystheus, ever laid
Aught on me like to this, her gift, the gift
Of Oeneus' daughter, falsely beautiful,

These are the last lines of the *Samson Agonistes* :—

All is best, though we oft doubt
 What the unsearchable dispose
 Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
 And ever best found in the close.
 Oft He seems to hide His face,
 But unexpectedly returns,
 And to His faithful champion hath in place
 Bore witness gloriously ; whence Gaza mourns,
 And all that band them to resist
 His uncontrollable intent ;
 His servants He, with new acquist
 Of true experience, from this great event
 With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
 And calm of mind, all passion spent.

and these the last lines of the *Trachiniae* :—

Who shall look into the future?
 But these things are anguish for us
 And shame for the Gods ;

And these things are Zeus' alone.

The task of Samson descended to Samuel ; and it may well be that,
 as Manoah forebodes, the grave of Samson among his native hills,

This garment of the Furies on my back,
 This clinging woven snare in which I die.

Again that scorching dart of deadly pain
 Shoots through my sides—the evil-eating pest
 Gives me no space from torment. Oh, receive me,
 Ruler of darkness—strike me, flash of Zeus !
 O king, send down thy thunders ! O father, hurl
 Thy thunderbolt upon me ! Again, again
 It gnaws me, it has blazed into new fire !
 Ah hands, ah shoulders, breast, ah trusty arms,
 Yes ye, ye in this plight, are they who quelled
 The habitant of Nemea ; the shepherds' scourge,
 The lion, before whose face no man might come,
 And Lerna's hydra and the Centaur host
 Separate from men, fierce, lawless, great in strength,
 And the Erymanthian beast, and the hound of hell
 Three-headed, an appalling enemy,
 Born of Echidna, and the serpent-guard
 Of golden apples in Earth's utmost clime,
 And of trials ten thousand other I had taste,
 And no man took a trophy from my hand.
 So now—joint loosed from joint—flesh rent to shreds—
 I perish by this blind pest ! I—I, the son
 Vaunted of royal mother—I proclaimed
 The son of Zeus, whose throne is in the stars !

between Zorah and Eshtaol, was long visited by the men of his tribe and people with the remembrance only of a triumph—of a victory which his successors had perpetuated, the continuous victory of Jehovah over Dagon. But it was with another feeling that the Greeks of a later age saw the mountain, consecrated by tradition, which looked on the Malian Gulf—the mountain which had witnessed the fiery apotheosis of Herakles :—

Where the great warrior, wrapt in heav'nly flame,
High above Oeta's steep,
Was taken, a god, unto Gods.

This was no link in a chain of unbroken victories, no incidental assertion of a good power ever triumphant over evil ; it was, for them, a lonely instance of superhuman strength towering above the rugged, low range of human history, and confronting, though not vanquishing, except by the death which led to immortality, the awful malignity of fate.

The *Samson Agonistes* is a great poem ; it is also a noble drama, though its rank as a poem is far higher than its rank as a drama. But neither as poem nor as drama is it Hellenic. Its sorrow is the sorrow of Jeremiah ; its joy is that which inspires the songs of Miriam and of Deborah.¹

¹ ' Hear, O ye kings ; give ear, O ye princes ; I, even I, will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.'



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and Schoolmaster

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MILTON AS SCHOOLBOY AND SCHOOLMASTER

By A. F. LEACH

Read December 10, 1908

PROBABLY in none of our famous men, certainly in none among our great poets, is it easier to see and to show that the child was father of the man than in Milton. Instead of being, as the vulgar usually imagine of a poet, a kind of Puck, or, at the best, an Ariel, wafted on the wings of wantonness hither and thither in irresponsible vagaries, Milton passed all but one and a half of his sixty-six years in the close circle of staid and sober home life. His alarms and excursions were those of the mind out of the body. It is therefore not surprising that his school-days had a permanent impression on Milton's views and works.

I. MILTON AS SCHOOLBOY.

Milton's school was St. Paul's School, the 'Free Scole of Poules', as Colet called it, the Grammar School of the cathedral church of St. Paul's, to give it its older and more exact title. This was the obvious school for a London citizen's son living in Bread Street, being then not in the distant suburb of Hammersmith, but at the east end of St. Paul's Churchyard, in the very centre of civic life, not one hundred yards from his home. Moreover, the fact that it was a Free School, free of tuition fees for all its one hundred and fifty-three day-scholars, strictly limited by the number of the seats, would not have been without its attraction to a thrifty scrivener. All we certainly know of Milton's school life is when it had come to an end. This we only know from the record of the admission at Christ's College, Cambridge, Feb. 12, 1624-5, of John Milton of London, son of John, at school under Mr. Gill, high master of St. Paul's, or, as it stands in the affected Latin of the day, in the original, 'instituted in the elements of letters under Master Gill, prefect of the Pauline gymnasium,' using a term for school now fortunately confined to Germany.

It must be confessed that almost everything else to do with Milton's school-days depends not on documentary evidence, not even on 'oral tradition', but on inference and conjecture. But where would biographers and commentators be if the *Lives of the Poets* was all plain sailing on the sea of fact? No register of admissions or school lists of St. Paul's School exist before 1748. So at least it is said, though, as the records of the Mercers' Company, who were for three and a half centuries the sole governors of the school, and are still a chief part of its governing body, have never been opened to research, it is by no means certain that no admission lists exist. The non-existence of a register is a breach of duty, for an admission book was contemplated by the statutes of 1518, it being provided that: 'a chylde at the first admission onys for ever shall pay 4*d.* for writynge of his name. This mony . . . shall the pore scoler have that swepith the Scole and kepith the Scole cleane.' Still no list is forthcoming.

Anthony Wood (*Fasti* 262), who cites a 'friend who was well acquainted with, and had from him [Milton] and from his relations after his death most of this account', sends him to Cambridge at the age of fifteen, and speaks of his staying up late at night at College 'as at school for three years before'. From this it was computed that Milton entered St. Paul's in 1622, or the end of 1621. As, however, Milton's lifelong friendship with Charles Diodati was a school friendship, and Diodati went to Oxford in Feb. 1621-2, Professor Masson rightly infers that we must allow more than a possible term for the friendship to ripen. He therefore enters him at St. Paul's in 1620. As on entering Cambridge in 1624 Milton was not fifteen but sixteen and a quarter years old, this gives him a school life not of three years but of four. But boys went to public schools much earlier then than now. It is only in the last fifty years that the growth of preparatory schools and competition for scholarships has postponed the age, first to twelve and now to thirteen. In Milton's day, and for many years after, seven was the normal age for boys to go to school, especially to a day-school, as St. Paul's was. His contemporary Charles Hoole, in his *New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching School*, written in 1637, and practised for fourteen years, first at Rotherham and then in London, sets out a seven years' course, beginning at seven years old as the normal age.

As Milton was already astonishing the household with his Latin verses at the age of eleven, i. e. in 1618, and verses were not done till the 4th form, which he would in the usual course reach in three years, we may send him to school more safely in 1615. Even if we take Jansen's poetic portrait of Milton at the age of ten as a

charming apple-cheeked boy with brown eyes as marking the beginning of his life in the world of school, he would have gone there in 1618. Milton's own account of his early learning certainly points to an earlier date than 1620. For while he records¹ how at twelve years old he began to sit up to midnight to do his lessons, he implies that he had been to school before he began that vicious practice.

My father destined me while yet a little boy for the study of humane letters, which I seized with such eagerness that from the twelfth year of my age I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight; which, indeed, was the first cause of injury to my eyes, to whose natural weakness there were also added frequent headaches. All which not retarding my impetuosity in learning, he caused me to be daily instructed both at the grammar school and under other masters at home; and then, when I had acquired various tongues and also some not insignificant taste for the sweetness of philosophy, he sent me to Cambridge.

On a boy of Milton's temperament the associations of the school must have had no small influence. St. Paul's School, though in its building it was only 'the newe scole of Poules', as Colet dubbed it almost a century before, was, as an institution, at least 500 years, and probably 800 years, older. For it was the old Cathedral Grammar School, part of the foundation of the Cathedral Church.

There is still extant among the archives of St. Paul's the actual deed in which, about 1112, Bishop Richard Belmeis records, not, as stated by Bishop Stubbs, the foundation of the school, but the confirmation to a new master, 'Hugh the schoolmaster (*magistro scholarum*) *ex officio* as master, and his successors in that dignity, the place of Master Durand [the late master] in the angle of the tower where Dean William placed him by my order.' The tower was the bell-tower of the Cathedral, which, as usual in early days, stood detached from the church, and was at the east end of the churchyard. Here the school stood till Colet built a new schoolhouse a few yards to the north, in 1512, on the site of the later building, which still bears the inscription that it is St. Paul's school. Still extant also is the actual appointment by the same bishop, about 1120, of the next master, granting to 'Canon Henry, foster son of master Hugh, St. Paul's school as honourably as the church ever held it at its best and most honourable estate' with an endowment of lands and tithes at Fulham, Ealing, and Madeley. Still more interesting is a third document, also still to be seen, of the year 1137 or 1138, by which Bishop Henry of Blois, King Stephen's brother, Bishop of Winchester, holding the bishopric of London during a vacancy in the See, directed

¹ Milton, *Defensio Secunda* (*Works*, vi. 286).

the chapter of St. Paul's and the Archdeacon of London to 'pronounce sentence of excommunication against those who without the leave of Schoolmaster Henry presume to teach, in the whole city of London, except those who teach the schools of St. Mary le Bow and St. Martin le Grand.' So important in those days did the highest ecclesiastical authorities esteem the schools, that here, as elsewhere, the thunders of the Church were invoked to protect the authorized schoolmasters' monopoly and put down unlicensed infringers of it. No overlapping was allowed in those days. The reason for the exemption of St. Mary le Bow was that it was a 'peculiar' of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the seat of his principal ecclesiastical court, then as now called the Court of Arches, and so was extra diocesan to London; while St. Martin le Grand was a collegiate church with a Dean and Canons almost as ancient and privileged as St. Paul's itself, and the deanery itself was or was about to be held by Bishop Henry of Blois himself.

St. Paul's school, called, *par excellence*, the school of the city (*scole urbis*), is recorded by Fitzstephen, who had himself been Dean of the Arches and afterwards a judge of the Supreme Court, to have been attended in his youth, about 1118, by St. Thomas the Martyr, better known as Thomas à Becket, before he went to the nascent University of Paris. Becket's biographer records not only the boys' studies, but their sports. How on feast-days, saints' days, they met in the churches and held disputations. The schools then, when Oxford University was just being born, performed in part the office of universities.

The elder scholars spoke argumentatively, others by way of question and answer. These roll out enthymemes, those use the form of perfect syllogisms. Some dispute merely for show as they do at collections, others for truth. The rhetoricians . . . observe the precepts of their art and omit nothing belonging to it. The boys of the three schools hold contests in verse or prose with each other on the principles of grammar or the rules of preterites and supines. Others in epigrams, rhymes and metres use the old street gags, with Fescennine licence scourging their schoolfellows . . . without mentioning names they hurl abusive epithets at them, with Socratic salt girding at their failings or perhaps those of their elders, and in bold dithyrambs biting them with the sharp tooth of Theon. The audience ready to laugh with wrinkled noses redouble their shrill guffaws.

This striking passage and its termination, which is a quotation from Persius, are of themselves sufficient to refute the absurd notion which has become current that the old grammar schools taught boys nothing but how to stumble through the Psalms with a few Gregorian chants.

St. Paul's School still retained its pre-eminence in the days of Chaucer, who, we can hardly doubt, was one of its scholars. In 1394 a Bill in Parliament to set up other schools was rejected. The first known addition to the schools of London was in 1420, when we find a grammar schoolmaster at St. Michael's, Cornhill, receiving a royal ward as pupil. In 1442 St. Anthony's School was established in St. Anthony's Hospital in Threadneedle Street, under royal auspices with exhibitions to Oriel College, its head master receiving the same salary and emoluments as the head master of Eton, founded two years before. In Stow's boyhood, this school, at which he seems to have been himself, numbered over 200 boys, and in the yearly disputations at St. Bartholomew's, which still continued as in Becket's day, used to eclipse its Pauline rival. It was this old school of St. Paul's with all its traditions and 'its rights, privileges, and appurtenances whatsoever', and the old school building with four shops under it, which Dean Colet, under the special authority of Pope, bishop, dean and chapter, and the King, bought from himself and his fellow-canon in 1510, and transferred to his new school, the chapter specially reserving to the high master of the new school, whether he was priest or layman, a stall in the choir of the cathedral church, the same as the old one enjoyed, so long as he appeared in a decent surplice. In fact, what Colet did for St. Paul's School was, not to found a new school, but to make a new scheme for an old one of immemorial antiquity, giving it a new governing body, the Mercers' Company, laymen, instead of himself and his chapter, a large additional endowment, and a fine new building. The school was still reckoned as an appendage of the church. The boys still walked in the processions of the Canons, while such processions still prevailed, and still attended the cathedral church on high days and holidays. Much of this high tradition and ancient history must have been known to Milton, as part of it is told, though with some grievous blunders, in Stow's *Survey of London*, which we may be sure was to be found in the book-loving household in Bread Street, and often quoted in St. Paul's School. It is certain that the *genius loci* had its effect on his mind. For it was not at Cambridge or at Horton parish church, but as a boy of St. Paul's School, attending St. Paul's Cathedral, that he learned to

love the high embowèd roof,
 With antique pillars massy proof,
 And storied windows richly dight,
 Casting a dim religious light:
 There let the pealing organ blow
 To the full-voiced choir below

In service high and anthems clear,
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
 Dissolve me into ecstasies
 And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

The small chamber of Christ's College Chapel, even Great St. Mary's itself, certainly could not have given the experience which drew from this young Puritan a loftier, a more effective, and more exact picture of an ancient church, a solemn service, and sweet music than any Laudian mumblor of ceremonies ever dreamt of.

Further, when Milton uttered the wish

But let my due feet never fail
 To walk the studious cloisters pale,

he was probably reproducing the actual experience of his youth. For the cloisters of St. Paul's were almost contiguous to the school; and the epithet 'studious' suggests that at St. Paul's then, as at Winchester till within almost living memory, during the hot days of summer, the boys deserted the close-packed school for the cool and spacious cloisters, to do, or at least prepare, their lessons.

While the *genius loci* of the old school thus bestowed on Milton the admiration for antiquity and august architecture which gave colour to his day-dreams and splendour to his poems, the *genius hominis* under which he fell gave a very different direction to his waking views of the world and his active life. The masters under whom Milton came were the high master, Alexander Gill, the sub or sur master William Sound, and the under-usher, first Oliver Smythe and then Alexander Gill the younger. Of William Sound, though Milton must have been under him at first, we hear no sound, nor of Oliver Smythe. But the two Gills were important elements in the formation of Milton the poet and publicist. Alexander Gill the elder was in the middle of his tenure of office when Milton went to school, having been appointed from Norwich Grammar School in 1608, and continuing in the mastership till his death in 1635. He had, while at Norwich, published a tract on the Trinity.

In 1619, while Milton was at St. Paul's, he published his *Logonomia Anglica*, which had the same object as the *Fonetik Nuz*, the reform of English spelling on phonetic lines. It was also an English grammar, which, though written in Latin, was illustrated with extracts from English poets, notably Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, 'our Lucan, Samuel Daniel', 'our Juvenal, George Withers'. Its literary history was not very sound when it charged Geoffrey Chaucer, 'of unlucky omen,' with having 'made his poetry famous by the use of French and Latin words', oblivious of the fact that French was the vernacular of the

English upper classes till the French wars of Edward III made it unpatriotic, and that even in schools Latin was translated not into English but into French till about 1380. However, as Professor Masson has remarked, 'If Gill was only half as interesting in his schoolroom as in his book, he must have been an effective and even delightful teacher.' Milton may well have owed to him his early appreciation of English poetry, which made him at the age of nineteen salute it in a college exercise :

Hail native language that by sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak.

It is remarkable that even in that early and sportive effort Milton declares his 'preference for themes sublime' :

Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound :
Such where the deep transported mind may soar,
Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
Look in.

The versions in verse of Psalms cxiv and cxxxvi, 'done by the author at fifteen years old,' were probably for some school exercise. Prosaic as they are, they are studded with epithets of real poetic power far beyond those usually found in attempts at poetic versions of the Psalms, which generally make us agree with Browning's judgement on Clement Marot, that 'his faculties were in no small mist when he versified David the Psalmist'. These epithets have been traced to Spenser, Chaucer, Drummond, and so forth, and especially to Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas. But though not original, they show that Milton, while, as a scholar is brought up to do, picking up the crumbs from the feast of languages which he attended, was gifted with exceptional appreciation of what were the most toothsome crumbs.

Young Gill had a more certain and direct connexion with Milton. An old Pauline himself, under his father, he went with an exhibition to Trinity College, Oxford, and thence to be one of the first scholars of the newly-founded Wadham College. It is recorded in the margin of a scurrilous poem against him in his later years that when a scholar at Wadham, called on to begin the chant of a psalm, he 'flung out of the chapel, saying *Quicumque vult*, let him begin it'. A Latin threnody of his on the death of Prince Henry, the eldest son of James I, had perhaps attracted some attention at Oxford in his freshman's year, as it was subsequently (1632) included in a published volume of his Latin poems, entitled '*πάρεργα sive Poetici Conatus*'.

The collection comprised a similar Greek poem on the death of Queen Anne in 1618. Gill took his M.A. degree in 1619, and two years after was appointed by his father under-usher at St. Paul's. In the interim perhaps he was a master at Farnaby's private school, the first perhaps of authorized private schools in London, and certainly the most famous. On New Year's Day, 1620-1, Gill sent him a poetical epistle in Latin with a skin of canary wine. When Gill junior came to St. Paul's, Milton must have been somewhere at the top of the school, and evidently struck up a great friendship with him. For two of his letters to Gill from Cambridge have been preserved: one on May 20, 1628, thanking him in rather ecstatic terms for some Latin verses on a victory of Prince Henry of Nassau, Stadtholder of Holland. The other was on July 2, 1628, sending Gill some verses written by himself for the commencement at Cambridge, 'knowing you', he says, 'to be a very severe judge in poetical matters and a very candid judge of my productions'. In one letter, which shows close personal and literary intimacy, he says, 'as often as I recall your almost constant conversations with me (which even in this Athens I miss) I straightway think, and not without grief, of how much benefit my absence from you has deprived me, as I have never left your company without a clear increase and ἐπιδοσις of literary knowledge, just as if I had been to some emporium of learning'.

Now young Gill was a very strong Protestant and Puritan, and therefore strongly against the prevalent political system and politicians of the day, the Duke of Buckingham, and under him Laud. One of his Latin poems, written the year after Milton went up to Cambridge, was a poem of rejoicing, *In ruinam camerae papisticae Londini*, on the fall of a Popish chapel in Black Friars, which killed nearly 100 people, and as it happened, according to the Roman reckoning, new style, on November 5, was hailed as God's judgement for Gunpowder Plot. Though 'our benignant prince lets you meet for your idolatrous worship, God himself takes his cause in hand' is the effect of it. When Milton was writing his letters to Gill in 1628, in the first of which he hopes that 'our own affairs turning out more fortunate England itself will demand your congratulatory muses', Parliament was in the throes of its first great struggle with the king, which ended in the Petition of Right. On August 23, Buckingham was murdered by Felton. On Sept. 5 there must have been great excitement at St. Paul's School, when Gill was fetched out of it by two royal pursuivants and taken before Laud, questioned and committed prisoner to the Gate House, 'so close that neither father, mother, nor friend can speak to him.' All this, because on a visit to Oxford, Gill had, in

private talks in the buttery, and at beer-drinking in the cellar of Trinity College, made, as Laud expressed it, 'speeches so foul against religion, allegiance, your Majesty's person, and my dear lord by execrable hands laid in the dust' that he had examined him in private. Gill had been informed against by William Chillingworth, then a newly elected Fellow of Trinity, who shortly after became a Jesuit, but returned to be rewarded with a canonry. It is odd that Masson, who had gone to the State Papers himself, was in any doubt about Chillingworth's share in what the late Bishop of London called (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*) a business as discreditable to Laud as to Chillingworth. He had, it is now clear from the State Papers, himself been an *agent provocateur*. Gill's first speech against Charles I had merely consisted of this: 'We have a fine wise king. He has wit enough to be a shopkeeper to ask "What do you lack?" and that is all.' The real offence was that being asked by Chillingworth what he thought of James I, he answered that 'the duke and he were together, and if there were a hell and a devil, surely the devil was there'. Then, as a witness said, 'in a madbrain railing humour' he began a health to Felton, which most of the company drank with him, as most sound Protestants in the country would have done. At Chillingworth's instigation the rooms of one of Gill's correspondents were searched for 'incriminating' documents. Papers two years old were found. But nothing worse appeared than the following doggerel, which reflected more credit on Gill's political than on his poetical views. The point of it is that the king had been deprived of the use of his senses by Buckingham, and may be called

A PRAYER FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE KING'S SENSES.

And now, just God, I humbly pray
 That thou wilt take that slime away
 That keeps my sovereign's *eyes* from viewing
 The things that will be our undoing.
 Then let him *hear*, good God, the sounds
 As well of them as of his hounds.
 Give him a *taste* and timely too
 Of what his subjects undergo.
 Give him a *feeling* of their woes,
 And then no doubt his royal nose
 Will quickly *smell* those rascals' savours
 Whose blacky deeds eclipse his favours.
 Though bound and scourged for their offences
 Heaven bless my king and all his senses.

For this Gill was haled before the Star Chamber, ordered to be degraded from the ministry and from his degree (he was a B.D.), to be fined £2,000, and lose one ear at London and the other at Oxford.

Through the intercession of Gill the father, the loss of the ears, inflicted on Prynne and Burton for even less offences a few years later, with the fine, were remitted. But he was turned out of his mastership, and it is said degraded. If so, as he afterwards appears as D.D., he must afterwards have been restored. The loss of office was no great one to the family, as not Amurath an Amurath succeeded, but Harry Harry, George Gill, his brother, coming in his place as under-usuer.

Noscitur a sociis. In correspondence on this incident, Diodati, Milton's school contemporary, also of Trinity College, who was, fortunately for himself, away at the time, guesses that Chillingworth was the informer, showing that he sympathized with Gill. We may therefore conclude that Milton had in his schooldays imbibed from Gill and shared with Diodati the political views, the expression of which brought him by turns fame and fortune and infamy and misfortune, but from which he never swerved. In this he was unlike Gill, who in 1632 included in his *παρρηγία* some abject Latin verses in honour of Laud. But Milton had independent means, and poor Gill was dependent on his profession for his livelihood, and Laud, as Ordinary of London, could have stopped him in its exercise. By an odd turn of Fortune's wheel, it became one of the articles in the impeachment of Laud that he had unconstitutionally interfered on behalf of Gill, who succeeded his father as high master of St. Paul's School, with the Mercers' Company, when they gave him notice to quit. Laud then laid down that, though the Company, as Governors, had been given absolute power of dismissal, they could only exercise it with the consent of the Ordinary. Sufficient evidence is not forthcoming as to the rights and wrongs of the dismissal. The cause ostensibly laid by the Mercers was excessive flogging, and some ribald poems on Gill's flogging were published during the Commonwealth. But Gill alleged that it was because he claimed from the Company, for the school, the augmented revenues of Colet's endowment, which the Company put into their own pockets. As the Mercers in 1640 agreed to pay Gill £50 down, and a pension of £25 a year for life, as we know that as late as 1720 they had only increased the salary to double that prescribed by Colet nearly 200 years before, and as late as 1866 claimed the school property as their own, there is some reason to think that the flogging was only an excuse for getting rid of a somewhat violent reformer, who had the audacity to apply his principles to the school and to the City Company, who were its trustees.

While we can hardly doubt that young Gill gave a bias to Milton's politics which they never lost, and in the expression of which in

his prose works he became the greatest English publicist of his day, it is perhaps rather to the books used at St. Paul's that we can trace the bent shown alike in his earliest and latest poetical works to scriptural subjects and the treatment of them. Colet, in setting down 'what shalbe taught of the maisters and lernyd of the scolers', began very wisely by saying 'it passyth my wit to devyse and determyn in particular'. 'In generall' he laid down that they were to be 'taught allway in good litterature both latyn and greke, and goode auctors such as have the veray Romaine eliquence joyned with wysdome, . . specially Cristyn auctours that wrote theyre wysdome with clene and chast laten other in verse or prose'. Then he proceeded to specify first his own catechizon or catechism and Latin accidence in English, then two elementary Latin books of Erasmus.

And thenne other auctours Christian as Lactantius, Prudentius and Proba and Sedulius and Juuencus and Baptista Mantuanus, and suche other as shalbe thoughte convenyent and moste to purpose unto the true laten speech, all barbary, all corrupeion, all laten adulterate which ignorant blind folks brought into this worlde and with the same hath distayned and poysoned the old laten speech and the very Romaine tong which in the tyme of Tully and Sallust and Virgill and Terence were usid, whiche also Seint Jerome and Seint Ambrose and Seint Austen and many holy doctors lernyd in theyr tymes. I say that ffylthynesse and all such abusyon which the later blynde worlde brought in, which more ratheyr may be callid blotterature thenne litterature, I utterly abbanysh and exclude oute of this Scole, and charge the Maisters that they teche all way that is the best, and instruct the chyldren in greke and redyng laten, in redyng unto them suych auctours that hathe with wisdome joyned the pure chaste eloquence.

In fact Colet's reform took the shape now so much in vogue, which consists in going back on our fathers and grandfathers to our great-great and triple-great grandfathers. To the modern classical scholar it is a curious reflection on the critical standard of Colet's day that he should thus place the writers not of the silver, or even of the bronze age, but of the leaden age of Latin literature, on a par with those of the golden or Augustan age. It is an interesting question whether Colet knew that in prescribing such authors he was putting back the school curriculum of London in the sixteenth century to that of York in the eighth century, and replacing on the shelves of St. Paul's School library the books which Alcuin in a celebrated poem describes as the principal treasures of the York library in 780. Yet this is what, in the reaction against the sophistical, dialectical, hair-splitting treatises of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he was doing. We need not discuss here whether Lilly's and Erasmus' grammar was an advance on previous grammars. It was fated in its turn to be spoken of with quite as much reprobation for its 'blottera-

ture' as its predecessors. Milton himself, as will be seen, who had clearly suffered under the tyranny of grammar as taught at St. Paul's, much as Colet had no doubt suffered under the tyranny of logic as taught where he was at school, whether St. Anthony's or St. Paul's itself, framed a new book in the vain attempt to supersede it. In the long run it may be questioned whether the reign of grammar is not a more hopeless and soul-slaying tyranny than that of dialectic. For the minutiae of verbal criticism in a dead language and the learning by heart of elaborate rules which are of absolutely no use except for the dead language itself, are even worse than the definitions for the sake of defining, and the rules of arguing for the sake of argument, which, over-elaborate as they were, were at least applicable to all forms of discussion on all subjects whatever.

But in education almost any change is for the good, as the one fatal thing is hide-bound uniformity and conformity. No doubt in Colet's day the resurrection of these early Christian authors was an improvement on the 'ineffable' and the 'irrefragable' and the other 'able' doctors of the schools. Moreover, these authors had been an immense advance on the pagan authors of their own day of slowly dying paganism, the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ, when Christianity was the one progressive force. Even the Sermon on the Mount in hexameters was at least a fresher element in literature than the stale old stories of Bacchus and Ariadne or the invocation of the muses. Which of the authors mentioned by Colet, or how much of them, were actually read in St. Paul's School we do not know. In default of any ransacking of the Mercers' records, nothing like a curriculum of St. Paul's is forthcoming before the eighteenth century. Professor Masson avoids the subject, laying down (*Life*, i. 65) positively, 'Instead of peddling over Sedulius and other such small practitioners of later or middle-aged Latinity, recommended as proper class-books by Colet, the scholars of St. Paul's as of other contemporary schools, were now led through very much the same list of Roman prose-writers and poets as are still honoured in our academies.' No authority is cited for this dictum. That the classical authors were studied and that Greek especially had made great strides in the schools since the days of Colet, or rather since the accession of Elizabeth, for there was little taught before that, cannot be disputed. But seeing the scrupulous and almost superstitious reverence paid to the foundation statutes of the schools by those who administered them, with a Court of Chancery and its 'Commissions of Charitable Uses' ever ready to see them enforced, it is highly improbable that the only specific injunctions of the founder

of the 'newe scole of Poules' should have been wholly disregarded and put aside within a century of their issue. In spite of Nowell's catechism, Colet's 'catechizon' was still used, the Roman parts only, such as that on the Seven Sacraments, being dropped. The Latin prayers, omitting those to the Virgin, but including one to the Boy Jesus, were still said even in Strype's time, who was at the school during the Commonwealth. It is, therefore, incredible that the prescribed authors should have been ignored in the days when Laud was living.

Instead of searching among Italian or Dutch authors, whom Milton may or may not have known, and who at all events came to him as moderns and inferiors, the inspiration which impelled him to the Hymns of the Nativity and the Passion while he was a boy, and to *Paradise Lost* alike in his youth, his manhood, and his old age, we can find it in those authors whom he studied in his most impressionable years, who came to him with all the halo of antiquity and the hallowed tradition of the 'pious founder' and the school. Let us take these authors in detail.

The first, Lactantius, is at first sight no food for babes. But seeing that boys were set to read Cicero *De Natura Deorum* at Winchester at the age of fifteen, in 1865, there seems no reason why, when boys had only recently ceased to be inducted into the mysteries of the predicaments and predicables at that age, they should not have read Lactantius' *Institutes* at St. Paul's in 1620. It is a most able work, full of close argument and cogent reasoning, and the way in which Cicero himself is dissected on the subject of the relation of God as creator to matter, would do credit to a Paley or a Huxley. In book ii, 'On the origin of sin', *De origine erroris*, Lactantius takes a view of the position of Christ as Son of God and his part in creation, which, it has been pointed out (*Dict. Christ. Biog.*), is not far short of Arian, and is precisely the view taken by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, book v. Milton was, as is known from a posthumous publication, an Arian, and he may have unconsciously imbibed this view from Lactantius himself, a result which perhaps Colet hardly contemplated. Matters of high theology, 'every slip in which entails Twenty-nine distinct damnations, one certain if another fails,' cannot be discussed here. But there is a singular resemblance between Lactantius' observations in the same book on the folly of seeking to know too much about how the creation was done, and a passage in Milton, which may be quoted in safety.¹

¹ Lact. *Inst.* ii. 9 'Quomodo autem ille fecerit ne mente quidem videtur, quia, ut Hermes Trismegistus ait, "Sciat igitur quam inepte faciat qui res innarrabiles quaerit. Hoc est enim modum conditionis suae transgredi, quousque homini liceat accedere."'

Lactantius says, 'But how he did it cannot even be conceived, for, as Hermes Trismegistus says, "Let him who asks things beyond the power of narration know how foolishly he acts. For this is to pass the bounds of his nature and the limits which man can reach."' We may well ask whether it was not from Lactantius that Milton first heard of the 'thrice great Hermes' whom he wished to call up in *Il Penseroso*. Certainly Raphael's speech to Adam (*Par. Lost*, vii. 118) is indebted to Lactantius:

Such commission from above
I have receiv'd, to answer thy desire
Of knowledge within bounds; beyond, abstain
To ask; nor let thine own inventions hope
Things not reveal'd, which th' invisible King,
Only omniscient, hath suppress'd in night,
To none communicable in earth or heaven.

As to Proba, this good lady, whose identity is somewhat shadowy, but is conjecturally Proba Valeria Fultonia, wife of Adulf, a proconsul at the end of the fourth century, was guilty of a work called *Centones Virgiliani*. One can but wonder alike at the good taste and good sense of Colet in recommending for his scholars a poem entirely composed of lines of Virgil wrested from their context and re-arranged as a patchwork Life of Christ. He perhaps thought that this curious *tour de force* gave profane Virgil, whom many wished to drive from the schools, a sacred form, and so preserved him. Milton seems to owe the exordium to *Paradise Lost* to the *Invocatio Dei* which begins this strange medley. If not, it is a singular coincidence that, while Proba quotes in her Invocation

Nec libet Aonio de vertice ducere Musas,

Milton should in his Invocation speak of

my adventurous song
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount.

Caelius Sedulius was a fifth-century schoolmaster of a rhetoric school, which, in Roman times, rather than the grammar school corresponded to the upper forms of our grammar schools. He may have specially commended himself to Colet by his description of Christ as the Boy Doctor among the doctors of the Temple; an incident commemorated by the statue of the Boy Jesus in the school, with above it, suggested by Erasmus, a picture of God the Father and the label 'Hear ye Him'. Sedulius' Easter Song (*Carmen Paschale*) begins with some fine lines in

assertion of the right of the Christian poet to sing the saving truths of Christ instead of the vicious fictions of the heathen.¹ Though the poem as a whole is not up to this sample, it was immensely popular. Sixteen MSS. ranging in date from the seventh to the sixteenth century are known, and forty editions in print. But it is doubtful how far Sedulius was read at St. Paul's, his Paschal feast savouring too much of the mass.

Juvenius, who is also said to have been a rhetoric schoolmaster, turned the Gospels into Virgilian hexameters in his *Historia Evangelica*. The proem to it, comparing Matthew to a law-giver, Mark to an eagle, Luke to a bull, and John to a lion, is primarily responsible for the representation of the Evangelists under those figures; though later authors and artists transmuted the emblems of Mark and John. But except for the exordium Juvenius' style is bad and bathos is not seldom reached. It may be doubted whether this book, if read at St. Paul's at all, contributed anything to Milton.

No such doubt can be felt of their contemporary, Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, the Christian Pindar, as he has been called, to whom Milton's debt is great and plain. A Roman rhetorician and lawyer, Prudentius' poems were published in 409. He is known to have been used as a school-book not only by Alcuin in the eighth but by Bruno in the tenth, and by Ludovicus Vives, the Spanish schoolmaster who became a fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in the fifteenth century.

There are at least two illustrated Anglo-Saxon editions of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, or 'Battle of the Soul between Vices and Virtues', extant, one at Cambridge and the other in the British Museum. This last was almost certainly used as a school-book as it is interlined in Anglo-Saxon. It ought to be reproduced in facsimile as a striking specimen of Anglo-Saxon art.

Parts of Prudentius' *Daily Hymns* (*Liber Cathemerinon*) appear in the Sarum Service books. Some of them have been translated into

¹ Cum sua gentiles studeant figmenta poetæ
Grandisonis pompare modis tragicoque boatu,
Ridiculove Getæ seu qualibet arte canendi,
Saeva nefandarum renovent contagia rerum
Et scelerum monumenta canant, rituque magistro
Plurima Niliacis tradent mendacia biblis,
Cur ego Davidicis assuetus cantibus odas

Claræ salutiferi taceam miracula Christi,
Cum possim manifesta loqui, Dominumque tonantem
Sensibus et toto delectet corde fateri?

English verse no longer ago than 1890. They are couched in various metres, sapphics, hendecasyllabics, asclepiads, and what not, but the most used is that which became the predominant metre of mediaeval hymns, the 'dimeter Iambic'. Now of the twelve Cathemerinon, the last two are on Christmas Day (*Hymnus Octavo Kalendas Ianuarias*), and on Twelfth Night (*Hymnus Epiphaniae*), and one of Milton's earliest efforts, in sacred poetry at least, is the hymn *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*. Speaking generally, we cannot but feel that Milton had read the one before he wrote the other. In particular, though Milton is to Prudentius as an organ to a harpsichord, yet it cannot be doubted that the splendid pathos of Milton's description of the desertion of the shrines of the heathen gods on the birth of Christ is directly inspired by Prudentius. 'Since God clothed himself with his mother's flesh,' says Prudentius, in Sir George Young's translation;¹—

Silence prevails within the Delphian cave,
The tripod gapes, the Sybils cease to rave;
Her streams have vanished from Dodona's grot;
Cumae is mute and Ammon answers not.

I see the shades I summoned scour away,
Lured by no savour backward to the day.
Her torch extinguished and her scourge untied
Persephone affrighted turns aside.
No mystic spell, no magic charms avail

The laurel slips from off the Flamen's head.²

¹ *Translations from Prudentius*, p. 112, ed. by F. St. John Thackeray. Bell, 1890.

² Prud. *Apoth.* 435–44, 474–8:

Ex quo mortalem praestrinxit spiritus alvum
Spiritus ille Dei, Deus et se corpore matris
Induit, atque hominem de virginitate creavit:
Delphica dampnatis tacuerunt sortibus antra,
Non tripodas cortina tegit, non spumat anhelus
Fata Sibyllinis fanaticus edita libris.
Perdidit insanos mendax Dodona vapores,
Mortua iam mutae lugent oracula Cumae,
Nec responsa refert Libycis in Syrtibus Ammon:

Accitas video longe dispergier umbras.
Territa Persephone vertit vestigia retro
Extinctis facibus, tracto fugitiva flagello.
Nil agit arcanum murmur nil Thessala prosunt
Carmina turbatis, revocat nulla hostia manes.

Flamen et ipse tuas miratur vertice laurus
Cedere.

These are stanzas nineteen and twenty-one of Milton's hymn :

The oracles are dumb
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving ;
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving ;
 No nightly trance or breathèd spell
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

 In consecrated earth,
 And on the holy hearth,
 The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint ;
 In urns and altars round,
 A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the flamens at their service quaint.

A curious feature of this passage is that, while undoubtedly inspired, as a whole, by Prudentius, many of its details are due to another of the 'Cristyn auctours' prescribed by Colet, for St. Paul's School, Baptista Mantuanus. He was rather an odd companion for Lactantius and Prudentius. For John the Baptist of Mantua, or, in his native tongue, Giovanni Spagnuoli, was a Carthusian monk, who lived ten centuries after Prudentius. He produced in the last quarter of the fifteenth century Latin poetry of many kinds, held by his contemporaries to be of supreme quality. Colet's conjunction of him with the fifth-century writers is much as if a modern school scheme-master were to recommend in one breath, as models of English verse, Chaucer and Mr. George Meredith.

The most popular of the Mantuan's poems were his 'Bucolics', which were supposed to combine all the elegance of Virgil's 'Eclogues' without any of their grossness. Shakespeare makes Holofernes, the pedantic schoolmaster—most probably George Hunt, of Magdalen College, Oxford, Head Master of the Grammar School of Stratford-on-Avon—quote the first line 'Fauste, precor gelida'; a sufficient proof that it was a common Elizabethan school-book. The *Hymn of the Nativity* makes the inference irresistible that 'old Mantuan', as Holofernes calls him, continued to be read at St. Paul's in Jacobean days.

For in the stanzas just quoted, the Lemures clearly come from Mantuanus' lines,¹ 'The Lemures'² driven from their shrines, through

¹ This and the other parallels cited are derived from a paper by Mr. Albert S. Cook in *Mod. Lang. Rev.* ii. Jan. 2, 1907, to which Professor Robertson drew my attention since this paper was read.

² Mantuan. ed. 1513, I. 236 b :

Ex adytis pulsi lemures per inania terrae
 Spiramenta viam celeres iniere sub ima

the empty breathing holes of earth fled swiftly to lowest hell,' while Osiris and Anubis, who appear in stanzas 23 and 24, and 'the mooned Ashtaroth' and 'Thammuz mourned', in stanza 22, were derived from other parts of the same poem, the *Parthenice*. It is even more clear that the description of the 'universal peace through sea and land' which heralded the Nativity, 'the birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave', and 'the trumpet spake not to the armed throng' come from Mantuanus. 'There was peace; and safe repose had quelled the whole broad world; no trumpets, no arms sounded',¹ and 'the halcyon's offspring, new pledges of love, with flapping wings dared to rise and try their earliest flights.'² Even Mantuanus' rather untranslatable lines, 'There are who tell how the Dragon with burning brow dragged his tail dipped in Phlegethon (i. e. in flame), through the highest heaven' appear in the 'old dragon' who 'swinged the scaly horror of his folded tail.'³ There can be no doubt of the indebtedness of Milton to these passages. Yet nothing more strikingly shows the manner in which Milton transfigured his borrowed materials and transmuted dross into gold, than the way in which these somewhat prosaic poets of his schooldays have been transfigured and transmuted in the *Hymn of the Nativity*.

So too Prudentius' *Hamartigenia* or 'Origin of Sin', and his *Psychomachia*, or 'War of the Virtues and Vices', the one with its elaborate arguments, that the devil, the author of evil, was not an independent potentate but a subordinate prince, who had fallen through envy, its description, said to be the first written, at least in poetry, of the Christian heaven and hell, and the other with its battles of helmed and shielded spirits, were probably the first suggestions to Milton of Satan, the hero of *Paradise Lost*, of the War in Heaven, and the theological discussions in it. Enough has been said to carry conviction to readers that the books prescribed by Colet in 1518 were still read

Tartara, secretisque diu latuere cavernis.

- I. 79 a. Parthenices primo ingressi simulacra per omnem
Legimus Aegyptum subita cecidisse ruina
Et collisa solo. Iacuit resupinus Anubis,
Cornibus auratis solio ruit Isis ab alto,
Occidit extemplo luctu quaesitus Osiris.

¹ Mant. I. 67 b. Pax erat et domitum late placaverat orbem
Tuta quies; nusquam litui, non arma sonabant.

² Ibid. 70 b. Halcyonis foetae variis nova pignora pennis
Iam tolli audebant, primosque efferre volatus.

³ Ibid. 72 a. Sunt quoque qui summum traxisse per aethera caudam
Fronte sub ardenti mersa[m] Phlegethonte Draconem
Commemorent.

MILTON AS SCHOOLBOY AND SCHOOLMASTER 19

at St. Paul's in 1618, and gave the mind of Milton its bent towards the subjects of which they treated, and many hints in their treatment. St. Paul's School, therefore, may claim a more direct share in the splendid achievements of its greatest scholar than can be claimed by any other school in the works of its great alumni.

II. MILTON AS SCHOOLMASTER.

One ought perhaps to apologize to Milton for venturing to dub him schoolmaster. It was a title which he vehemently repudiated himself, and which his favourite pupil, Edward Phillips, vehemently repudiated for him :

Possibly his proceeding thus far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of some of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and schoolmaster. Whereas it is well known he never set up for a public school to teach all the young fry of a parish, but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to relations, and the sons of some gentlemen that were his intimate friends ; besides that, neither his converse, nor his writings, nor his manner of teaching, ever savoured in the least anything of pedantry ; and probably he might have some prospect of putting in practice his academical institution, according to the model laid down in his sheet of education.

It seems probable that it was partly to the younger Gill's influence that Milton's becoming a schoolmaster may be attributed. At all events, when Milton, after his return from Italy in 1640, settled in London, leaving his father in the country with his royalist second son, Christopher, it was to a house in Aldersgate, a few doors from Gill, who had set up a private academy there, that he repaired. Milton's life as a schoolmaster is as barren of facts as his life as a schoolboy. It lasted only about seven years. It was carried on first in the house in Aldersgate Street, then a suburb, the houses having gardens, while the end of the street bordered on the open country. Later, in 1645, as there was a prospect of more pupils, Milton removed to a larger house in the Barbican. But after his father's death in 1647, and consequent accession of income, accompanied by increasing interest in the political struggle, Milton abandoned schoolmastering for political pamphleteering. Professor Masson has drawn up a list of ascertained pupils, who with barely an exception are of an aristocratic kind, sons of people with handles to their names, when a handle was by no means so common as now.

Though to Milton school was but an interlude, it was one into which he entered with his accustomed thoroughness, and with his usual disregard of conventional doctrines. As everything that John Milton did or thought was not only of supreme importance to himself, but to the world at large, Milton, as schoolmaster, was bound sooner or later to

leave his mark in literature. There are two literary productions of his on the subject. The *Accedence commenced Grammar*, not published till 1669, when everything the author of *Paradise Lost* had written became of value, was no doubt a product of this period, fished out for the printer over twenty years later. The *Tractate on Education*, written, at the invitation of Samuel Hartlib, a Dutchman and educational reformer, resident in England, was published in 1644. They both begin with the same complaint, which is still vexing the soul of the educational reformer two and a half centuries later. 'We do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek;' says, after compliments, the *Tractate on Education*. The *Accedence* begins: 'It hath been long a general complaint, not without cause, in the bringing up of youth, and still is, that the tenth part of man's life ordinarily extended is taken up in learning, and that very scarcely, the Latin Tongue,' 'which tardy proficiencie' Milton attributed to 'making two labours of one by learning first the accedence, then the grammar, in Latin, ere the language of those rules be understood'. 'The only remedy was to join both books in one, and in the English tongue.' The *Accedence* is accordingly a Latin grammar written in English, and with much simplified rules, most exceptions being omitted and relegated 'to a good dictionary', which also this indefatigable worker had on hand, 'stored with good authorities'. The odd title seems to mean a grammar commenced with the accedence instead of the learning 'touching letters and syllables which is omitted as little different from an English spelling book'. It was perhaps the first complete Latin grammar in English, though Holt's *Lac Puerorum* in the beginning of the sixteenth century had allowed the babes to lap their Latin in that tongue, and Milton's contemporary, Hoole, had published a translated Lilly. It has not been the last. But the youth of the upper classes in England still take a tenth or more of their lives to learn little Latin and less Greek, and it may be questioned whether at the end most of them can read a Latin book or write a Latin exercise so well as those bred up on the unmitigated Lilly.

The *Tractate on Education* sought to supply a larger remedy for this waste of time by 'a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war. And how all this may be done between twelve and twenty-one, less time than is now bestowed in pure trifling at grammar and sophistry, is thus ordered.'

He then proceeds to set out his plan for an Academy, at once school and university, in a spacious house and grounds, such as then

occupied by John Milton, Esquire, of the Barbican. But whereas he had only at the outside some 30 pupils, this was to be for 150, including 20 servants. Here he was in advance of his age. Except Eton, and to a lesser extent Winchester, there was no school in England which enjoyed good recreation grounds. 'For their studies', to begin with, we are brought up short with the inevitable Latin grammar. Though Hartlib, under the influence of the Czech-German Comenius, was advocating a 'Reformed School' which began with English, Milton will have none of the modern '*Januas* and *Didactics*,' as Comenius' books were called, which he had not read and did not intend to read—'more than ever I shall read'. Latin is without question assumed as the only and necessary medium of education. Nor, in an age when not only all scientific works were in Latin, but even Milton himself, when he wished to attack a theological opponent or defend the execution of Charles I, had to write in Latin, was this assumption unreasonable. His authority is no authority on this for present times. Having to use Latin, Milton insists that Latin shall be pronounced in the modern method 'as near as may be to the Italian, especially in the vowels'.

The main thesis of the *Tractate* is that things should be learnt, not words.

Language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known. And though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only.

With this end grammar was to be learnt out of 'some easy and delightful book of education' as Cebes, Plutarch, Quintilian, with 'lectures and explanations', and the Milton touch is applied 'that they may be inflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue; stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear to God, and famous to all ages'. After grammar, mathematics. But the mathematicians will hardly approve of the space given to them. Arithmetic was to be taught 'at some other hour of the day, and soon after the elements of geometry, even playing, as the old manner was'.

Then we come to things. First, agriculture was to be learnt from Cato, Varro, and Columella. Next geography and the use of the globes, 'in any modern author'. In Greek, 'the difficulties of grammar being soon overcome,'

all the historical physiology of Aristotle and Theophrastus are open before them; with Vitruvius and Seneca's *Natural Questions*; then they descend to trigonometry, fortification, architecture, enginery, or navigation; and in natural

philosophy leisurely from the history of meteors, minerals, plants, and living creatures as far as anatomy. Then out of some not tedious writer the institution of physick that they may know how to manage a crudity [i. e. indigestion].

Apparently all boys were to learn all things. The objection which would at once arise from the modern advocate of learning things to the bookish nature of all this learning is met by the remark, 'To set forward all those proceeding in nature and mathematics, what hinders but that they may procure . . . the helpful experience of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries; and in the other sciences, architects, engineers, mariners, anatomists.'

But this is not all. The boys will now have acquired 'the art of reason called Proairesis' or the choice of good and evil. So enter Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, kept in order by David and Solomon and the Evangelists. Then the pupils proceed to economics, 'and now as before they may have learned at any odd hour the Italian tongue'. Soon after they go on to Greek, Latin, or Italian comedies and tragedies 'which treat of household matters.' Then come politics, next law, from Moses and Lycurgus to Justinian and the common and statute law of England. Sunday is devoted to theology, and 'the Hebrew tongue at a set hour might have been gained, . . . whereto it would be no impossibility to add the Chaldee and the Syrian dialect.' Next come histories, epics, and tragedies 'of stateliest and most regal argument', many to be learnt by heart and declaimed. 'Lastly' will be time for the 'organic arts,' logic, rhetoric, the laws of poetry, the practice of composition in writing and speaking. 'Whether they be to speak in Parliament or council, honour and attention would be waiting on their lips. There would then also appear in pulpits other visage, other gestures, and stuff otherwise wrought, than what we now sit under.'

Exercise was not to be neglected. Fencing, wrestling, music, especially 'after meat to assist and cherish nature in her first concoction', military manœuvres, excursions on horseback, sailing. We shall not then 'need the monsieurs of Paris to take our hopeful youth into their slight and prodigal custodies, and send them over back again transformed into mimics, apes, and kickshaws.'

The programme is so vast with its mathematics, Italian, Hebrew, Chaldee learnt in odd hours, its dismissal of the difficulties of Latin prose with the casual assumption 'ere half these authors be read they cannot but be masters of any ordinary prose' and of Greek with the aside 'the difficulties of grammar being soon overcome', that if the writer were any one but Milton we should suppose that the *Tractate on Education* was an elaborate skit on the expert in education, 'the educationist'—horrid word and still more horrid thing—of that day.

But we are precluded from maintaining this view by three considerations. First, the solemn conclusion which Milton addresses to Master Hartlib. He admits

This is not a bow for every man to shoot in that counts himself a teacher, but will require sinews almost equal to those which Homer gave Ulysses ; yet I am withal persuaded that it may prove much more illustrious, howbeit, not more difficult, than I imagine, and that imagination presents me with nothing but very happy and very possible according to best wishes, if God have so decreed and this age have spirit and capacity enough to apprehend.

The second consideration is that, as Milton points out, 'the course of study hitherto described is what I can guess by reading likest to those ancient and famous schools of Pythagoras, Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle, and such others.' These, of course, were not schools at all in our sense of the word. But the encyclopaedia of universal knowledge which Milton's academy was to bestow is not a whit more all-embracing than the ideal education of the perfect orator as set forth by Cicero, *De Oratore*, and in Quintilian's *Institutes*. But the third, and the chief and most convincing consideration, is that Milton's theory of education was but slightly idealized from Milton's practice in educating. This amazing programme was, according to Edward Phillips, Milton's earliest and most constant pupil, whom he taught from the age of ten to the age of seventeen, in large part actually carried out. In his *Life of Milton* Phillips mentions the

many authors which through his excellent judgment and way of teaching, far above the pedantry of common public schools (where such authors are scarce ever heard of), were run over.

The list comprises, on agriculture, Cato, Varro, Columella, Palladius ; Celsus, a physician ; Pliny's Natural History, Vitruvius' Architecture, Frontinus' Stratagems, Aratus' Phenomena, Dionysius Afer de situ orbis, Oppian's Cyngeticks, and Halieuticks (i. e. on dogs and fishing), Geminus' Astronomy, Polyænus' Warlike Stratagems, besides the ordinary classics. The Pentateuch in Hebrew 'a good entrance into the Targum or Chaldee Paraphrase', several chapters of St. Matthew in Syriac; besides Urstadius' Arithmetic, Riff's Geometry, Petiscus' Trigonometry, Johannes de sacro Bosco De Sphaera ; in Italian, Villani's History; and in French, Davity, 'the famous geographer of France'. On Sundays Greek Testament and a Perfect System of Divinity were read, collected by himself from the ablest of divines, 'Amesius, Wellebius, &c.' After all, this is not more amazing to modern notions than the tremendous list of books and subjects which Charles Hoole recommends for 'the common public school' in his *Discovery*, only

that the latter is mostly linguistic and grammatical. Nor was the programme so impossible when the school hours were from 7 to 11 a.m. and 1 to 5 p.m., with only one half-holiday a week, and home-work till midnight, as Milton himself did, to finish his prose and verse tasks, thus ensuring a twelve hours' working day, as it seems to our degenerate seven or eight hours' day. But when one remembers the horror that Virgil's *Georgics* inspired in the endeavour to remember the name of some unknown plant in Latin which was still more unknown in English and in fact, one cannot think that Frontinus or Vitruvius, Polyænus or Oppian are fit food for schoolboys, whatever hands may minister it. After all, *Non omnia possumus omnes*. Milton's *Tractate* suffers under the same disadvantage as Elliot's *De regimine Principum*, Ascham's *Scholemaster*, Locke's *Theory* and most treatises on education. It proceeded not from experience of a public school, but from that of a private tutor. Theories of education which may be all very well when applied by a single master of exceptional ability and enthusiasm to one or two pupils, to whom individual and exclusive attention is given, are incapable of application to the common crowd in a common school by a common man.

Still, Milton the Schoolmaster anticipated in theory what has since been partly realized in practice, the danger of exclusive bookishness, and the necessity of combining practical work with theoretical instruction. As a schoolmaster, as in everything else, he was miraculous in industry, magnificent in ideas, and splendid in style. In a word, he was Miltonic.



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Milton's Fame on the Continent

By

J. G. Robertson

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MILTON'S FAME ON THE CONTINENT

BY J. G. ROBERTSON

Read December 10, 1908

MILTON was the first English poet to inspire respect and win fame for our literature on the Continent of Europe, the first poet to be known and to be adjudged worthy of knowing by continental critics: and he was the only English writer whom the biographical lexicons of the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century considered it necessary to discuss at length. To *Paradise Lost* was due, to an extent that has not yet been fully realized, the change which came over European ideas in the eighteenth century with regard to the nature and scope of epic poetry; that work was the mainstay of those adventurous critics who dared to vindicate in the face of French classicism the rights of the imagination over the reason as the creative and motive force in poetry. Milton's influence on the German literature of the eighteenth century was hardly inferior to Shakespeare's, and he cast an equally strong spell over the minds of the pioneers of French Romanticism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These facts, if nothing else, are reason enough for considering, on the present occasion of the Tercentenary of the poet's birth, the part he has played in moulding the thought and imagination of the peoples of the Continent.

Just as Shakespeare found his way to the Continent through the medium of strolling players who performed garbled versions of his plays in the chief towns of northern Europe, so the knowledge of Milton was spread abroad by means that had even less connexion with literature. It was not as a poet at all that he first became known, but as the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the notorious defender of regicides. In 1652, John Dury published, by order of the English government, a translation of the *Εἰκονοκλάστης* into French,¹ which materially helped to spread Milton's fame, or rather

¹ *Εἰκονοκλάστης, ou Réponse au Livre intitulé Εἰκὼν Βασιλική, traduite de l'Anglois.* Londres, 1652. See D. Masson, *Life of Milton*, iv (1877), p. 448. In October, 1654, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, and sister of Charles I, wrote from the Hague to her son, the Elector Karl Ludwig of the Palatinate, recommending him

notoriety, abroad. Milton was mentioned, but not as a poet, by P. Costar in his *Mémoire des gens de lettres célèbres des pays étrangers*,¹ and the Comte de Comminges, Louis XIV's ambassador at the court of Charles II, made, in 1663, his famous report to his royal master to the effect that the arts and sciences had passed to France, and that, if there were any vestiges left in England, 'ce n'est que dans la mémoire de Bacon, de Morus, de Bucanan et, dans les derniers siècles, d'un nommé Miltonius qui s'est rendu plus infâme par ses dangereux écrits que les bourreaux et les assassins de leur roi'.² The lexicographers, C. Funccius, G. M. König, C. Gryphius, and V. Paravicini, give Milton brief notices in their biographical works,³ but they know him only as a political agitator, and especially as the author of *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, a book to which universal attention had been drawn on the Continent by the fact of its having been publicly burned at Paris and Toulouse. In 1697, Bayle honoured Milton by devoting to him three pages of his *Dictionary*, this being the only English poet mentioned in the work.⁴ Still, it is obvious that it was not Milton the poet, but Milton the political writer, in whom Bayle was interested, and he was content to repeat at second hand that *Paradise Lost* 'passe pour l'un des plus beaux ouvrages de poésie que l'on ait vu en anglais', *Paradise Regained* being 'not nearly so good'. In 1704, when the German scholar J. F. Buddaeus came to compile his *Allgemeines historisches Lexicon*, the first German encyclopaedia

to have nothing to do with Dury, who was to pass through Heidelberg, because 'he uritt and printed a booke, where he aprooves the king my dear Brothers murther, which I haue read, and he has translated into french Milletons booke against the Kings booke, so as I intreat you, not to see that rascall . . . ' (*Briefe der Elisabeth Stuart, Königin von Böhmen, an ihren Sohn den Kurfürsten Carl Ludwig von der Pfalz*. Herausgegeben von A. Wendland, Stuttgarter Lit. Verein, vol. cccxviii, 1902, p. 51). Daniel Heinsius mentioned, in 1651, a translation of the *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, but this does not appear to have been published. Chapelain discusses Milton in his correspondence (*Lettres*, Paris, 1880-3, ii, pp. 103, 110), and also Guy Patin. See J. M. Telleen, *Milton dans la littérature française*, Paris, 1904, pp. 2 ff., a study to which I must here express my indebtedness.

¹ See P. N. Desmolets, *Mémoires de littérature et d'histoire*, Paris, 1726, ii, p. 355 (quoted by J. J. Jusserand, *Shakespeare en France*, Paris, 1898, p. 107). Costar died in 1660.

² See J. J. Jusserand, *A French Ambassador at the Court of Charles II*, London, 1892, pp. 58, 205.

³ G. M. König, *Bibliotheca vetus et nova*, Altdorf, 1678, p. 541; C. Gryphius, *Apparatus sive dissertatio isagogica de scriptoribus historiam seculi XVII illustrantibus*, Leipzig, 1710, pp. 320, 333 ff.; V. Paravicini, *Singularia de viris eruditione claris*, Basel, 1713, p. 207.

⁴ *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Rotterdam, 1697, vol. ii, p. 590.

on a large scale, he devoted a comparatively long article to Milton,¹ but had not much more to say about Milton's poetry than what he found in Bayle. Still later, J. B. Mencke, who made extensive use of his predecessor's work, had, in his *Compendiöses Gelehrten-Lexicon* (1713), nothing to say of Milton as a poet at all, although he appears to have himself possessed a copy of the edition of *Paradise Lost* of 1704;² that is to say, the most generally used German biographical dictionary in the second decade of the eighteenth century did not consider it worth while even to mention Milton's poetry!

As a matter of fact, however, the ignorance of Milton's poetry at the end of the seventeenth century was by no means as great as this would imply, even in Germany. For as early as 1682—more than forty years before an attempt was made to translate Milton into any other modern European tongue—there appeared at Zerbst a translation of *Paradise Lost* into German: *Das verlustigte Paradeis, auss Johann Miltons zeit seiner Blindheit in Englischer Sprache abgefassten unvergleichlichen Gedicht*,³ by Ernst Gottlieb von Berge, privy secretary and interpreter to the Great Elector. And even this was not the first translation of the epic, one having been begun still earlier by a German in England, Theodor Haake, a writer who forms an interesting link between Germany and England in the seventeenth century. Haake was a Rhinelander by birth, and in 1625, at the age of twenty, came over to study at Oxford and Cambridge. He virtually spent the rest of his life in England, where under the Protectorate he played an important political rôle as mediator between Cromwell and the Continent. He was also one of the first founders of the Royal Society. Haake stood on friendly terms with Milton, and his translation of *Paradise Lost*—it does not go beyond the beginning of the fourth canto—was made about the end of the seventies. It is much superior to Berge's version, which it seems to have inspired, Haake having circulated his manuscript among his continental friends. His translation, however, was neither finished

¹ *Allgemeines historisches Lexicon*, iii (I quote from the edition of 1730), p. 569 (2½ columns). J. Klefeker devoted no less than eleven pages of his *Bibliotheca eruditorum praecocium*, Hamburg, 1717 (pp. 233 ff.), to Milton.

² See *Bibliotheca Menckiana*, Leipzig, 1723, p. 561.

³ There is a copy in the British Museum. See G. Jenny, *Miltons Verlorne Paradies in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, St. Gallen, 1890, pp. 5 ff. A reprint of Berge's translation, together with Haake's MS., was promised years ago by Professor A. Sauer in his series, *Bibliothek älterer deutscher Übersetzungen*, but the series seems to have been discontinued. On Berge, cp. J. Bolte, *Die beiden ältesten Verdeutschungen von Miltons Verlorenem Paradies*, in the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte*, i (1888), pp. 426 ff.

nor published, and a manuscript of it is preserved in the Landesbibliothek at Cassel.¹ Berge's work, it need only be added, is clumsy and uninspired, and attracted little or no attention at the time of its publication, although the reason is perhaps to be sought not so much in its mediocre quality as in the fact that Berge, following his friend's example, made the bold attempt to translate Milton in the rimeless metre of the original. When, many years later, Gottsched and Bodmer unearthed this first German *Paradise Lost*, they had little that was favourable to say about it.² In the same year in which it appeared, Daniel Morhof, the first continental writer to mention Shakespeare's name, discussed Milton's rimeless verse in his *Unterricht von der deutschen Sprache und Poesie*.³

But in spite of this promising beginning, there was no permanency in Germany's interest in Milton; Berge's translation was soon com-

¹ 'Das Verlostigte Paradeiss auss und nach dem Englischen I. M. durch F.H. zu übersetzen angefangen — voluisse sat.' On Haake, see H. L. Benthem, *Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulenstaat*, Lüneburg, 1694, pp. 57 ff.; also A. Stern, *Milton und seine Zeit*, iii, Leipzig, 1879, p. 26. In estimating the value of translations in spreading a knowledge of Milton, it must not be forgotten that *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* were translated into Latin in 1690 by a Scotchman, William Hog (*Paraphrasis poetica in tria Johannis Miltoni poemata*, London, 1690). This work seems to have been pretty generally known on the Continent, and it is quoted by Bayle.

² See Jenny, *l.c.*, pp. 6 ff., where quotations are given from Bodmer's correspondence with J. U. von König (*Literarische Pamphlete aus der Schweiz, nebst Briefen an Bodmer*, Zurich, 1781, p. 40, and A. Brandl, *Zur ersten Verdeutschung von Miltons Verlorenem Paradies*, in *Anglia*, i 1878, pp. 460 ff.). See also Hans Bodmer, *Die Anfänge des zürcherischen Milton*, in *Studien zur Literaturgeschichte M. Bernays gewidmet*, Hamburg, 1893, pp. 177 ff. 'Diese Übersetzung,' said Bodmer in the preface to the first edition of his translation of *Paradise Lost*, 'ist in keinen Ruf kommen. Wahr ist, dass Milton sehr verfinstert darinne aussiehet; doch behält auch der gefallene Poet so viel von seinem angebohrnen Glantze, dass er bey nachsinnenden Lesern ein Aufsehen machen, und zum wenigsten eine Begierde nach dem Original hat erwecken sollen' (p. 9). Cf. J. U. von König's opinion in a letter to Bodmer of May 15, 1725 (A. Brandl, *B. H. Brockes*, Innsbruck, 1878, p. 142). Gottsched's criticism is to be found in his *Beiträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit*, i (1732), pp. 85 ff.

³ 'Der bekante Johannes Milton hat ein vollständig Poëma: genannt *The Paradis lost*, ohne Reimen geschrieben, woselbst er in der Vorrede dieser Schreibart das Wort redet . . . In Teutscher Sprach hat noch niemand es [i. e., to write blank verse] zu versuchen begehret, ist auch eine unnötige Arbeit. Meines erachtens, wann einer die ungereimten Verse höher als die andern halten wolte, were es eben, als wann einer einer Strohfidel vor einer wollgestimten Geige den Vorzug gebe.' (*Unterricht von der teutschen Sprache und Poesie*, Kiel, 1682, pp. 568 f.) Morhof also mentions Milton in his *Polyhistor*, Lübeck, 1688, pp. 304 f. Cp. Jenny, *l.c.* pp. 8 ff

pletely forgotten, if, indeed, it had ever begun to be known. H. L. Benthem, in his *Engelländischer Kirch- und Schulenstaat* (1694), a kind of guide-book to England intended especially for theologians, has something to say of Milton;¹ but otherwise I have been able to trace no German mention of Milton—with the exception of a review in the Leipzig *Acta Eruditorum* of 1696—before 1700, when the same periodical drew general attention to him by a detailed account of Toland's *Life of Milton*.² Hamburg was one of the principal channels through which English literature found its way to Germany, and in the early years of the eighteenth century the Hamburg poets, Wernigke, Triller, Brockes (who translated parts of *Paradise Lost*), and Hagedorn, all took a warm interest in Milton.³

Meanwhile, France, although no attempt had yet been made there to translate Milton, was growing increasingly curious about him.⁴ A brief mention of his name in the *Journal des Savans* in 1708 was followed, two years later, by a distorted account, written in a spirit of religious intolerance, in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*; the 'impiety' and 'perfidy' of Milton's writings are condemned in no measured terms; *Paradise Lost* is disposed of as 'très séditieux', though much applauded in England, and his works in general are described as 'plutôt l'effet d'une imagination déréglée, que d'un jugement solide.'⁵

Thus it is not perhaps surprising that when the first translator of *The Spectator* into French arrived in his third volume (1718) at what he called Addison's 'critique fine et judicieuse du célèbre poème de Milton intitulé *Le Paradis perdu*' he excused himself from translating the papers in question on the ground that the poem 'n'a pas été et qu'il ne sera sans doute jamais traduit en notre langue'.⁶ A year

¹ There were two editions of this work, 1694 and 1732. For Milton, see pp. 57 ff. of the first edition, and pp. 115 ff. and 1121 ff. of the second. His poetic work receives, however, only a bare mention.

² *Acta Eruditorum*, 1696, pp. 226 f., 1700, pp. 371 ff. There are also frequent passing references to Milton in subsequent volumes. Toland's book was reviewed in H. Basnage de Beauval's *Histoire des ouvrages des savans*, February, 1699 (p. 87). Cp. Telleen, *l.c.*, p. 13.

³ See Brandl, *l.c.*, pp. 35, 100 ff.

⁴ Professor Spingarn has recently drawn attention to a passage in a letter from Vincent Minutoli to Bayle, of December 15, 1690, in which he refers to the high opinion the English had of Milton: 'Ils m'en ont parlé comme du *non plus ultra* de l'esprit humain' (*Modern Language Notes*, xxii (1907), p. 232). The citation is from E. Gigas, *Choix de la correspondance inédite de P. Bayle*, Copenhagen, 1890, p. 579.

⁵ *Journal des Savans*, 1708, pp. 331 ff: *Mémoires de Trévoux*, 1710, pp. 2123 ff. Milton's name was put on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1700, the Italian translation of *Paradise Lost* in 1732. (Telleen, *l.c.*, p. 7.)

⁶ *Le Spectateur, ou le Socrate moderne*, Amsterdam, 1714 ff., iii, preface. It is

earlier, however, Milton and his verse had been treated at considerable length, and with due seriousness, in the famous *Dissertation sur la poésie anglaise* in the *Journal littéraire*,¹ an article which, although not showing much originality, was a landmark of importance in the diffusion of English literature abroad. It contained the most enlightening and suggestive criticism of both Shakespeare and Milton that had up to that date appeared in French. The next ten years seem to have marked but little advance in Milton's progress in France; a few passing references to him in periodical publications exhausts it.² The years 1727-8 marked, however, the turning-point of Milton's fame on the Continent; for in 1727 appeared, first in English, and some months later in a French translation by the Abbé Desfontaines, Voltaire's *Essay upon Epick Poetry*. Even in his earliest years Voltaire had the art of commanding attention when he spoke; and this essay set all Europe thinking and talking about Milton, just as the *Lettres anglaises*, a few years later, laid the foundation of Shakespeare's fame on the Continent.

The *Essay upon Epick Poetry* was a much bolder and more effective plea for Milton's poetic greatness than anything Voltaire ever wrote about Shakespeare. Indeed, it may be said that nothing had yet been written—and nothing was to be written for many years to come—by a foreigner, which was so likely to awaken admiration for Milton as the final chapter of Voltaire's English essay. Unfortunately, however, when Voltaire published his own French version of the *Essay* in 1732, as a pendant to the *Henriade*, his attitude to Milton had undergone a change, and he either suppressed altogether the laudatory things he had said in English, or at least toned them down. He of importance to note that the early editions of *The Spectator* in French—which were so widely read all over the Continent—omitted the papers on Milton; these, however, were soon translated and published, separately, or together with the early French translations of *Paradise Lost*. (See below, pp. 8 f.)

¹ *Journal littéraire*, ix (1717), pp. 178 ff. There is also a mention of Milton in the volume for 1716. It is perhaps worth recording that Rapin, in his review of epic poetry (*Réflexions sur la Poétique*, 1709), ignores Milton completely; on the other hand, the Chevalier A. M. Ramsay does refer to him, without mentioning his name, in his *Discours sur la poésie épique et de l'excellence du Poème de Télémaque*, Paris, 1717, p. xxviii. (Telleen, *l.c.*, p. 8.)

² For instance, in the *Bibliothèque anglaise*, vol. i (1717), pp. 43, 377; vol. iv (1718), pp. 539 ff. (Review of Milton's tract *Of Education*). In Armand de la Chapelle's translation of *The Tatler* (*Le Babillard*, Amsterdam, 1724) occurs the earliest French translation of lines from *Paradise Lost*, namely viii, 268-91. It is quoted in full by Telleen, pp. 13 f. In a note to vol. i, p. 427, the translator of *The Tatler* complains that Milton has filled his poem with 'tant de Métaphysique, de Spiritualités, de Combats d'Intelligences etc. qu'à mon avis quelquefois il en est inintelligible.'

did not, in the original *Essay*, conceal the fact that much in Milton's epic was at variance with the sweetness and reason of the French classic canon, and he pointed out Milton's lapses from good taste; but the tone of his criticism of *Paradise Lost*, 'the noblest Work which human Imagination hath ever attempted,' was dignified, and he regarded the poet with an admiration which could not have been assumed merely to flatter his English readers.¹

What *Milton* [he said] so boldly undertook, he perform'd with a superior Strength of Judgment, and with an Imagination productive of Beauties not dream'd of before him. The Meanness (if there is any) of some Parts of the Subject is lost in the Immensity of the Poetical Invention. There is something above the reach of human Forces to have attempted the Creation without Bombast, to have describ'd the Gluttony and Curiosity of a Woman without Flatness, to have brought Probability and Reason amidst the Hurry of imaginary Things belonging to another World, and as far remote from the Limits of our Notions as they are from our Earth; in short to force the Reader to say, 'If God, if the Angels, if Satan would speak, I believe they would speak as they do in *Milton*.'

I have often admir'd how barren the Subject appears, and how fruitful it grows under his Hands.

The *Paradise Lost* is the only Poem wherein are to be found in a perfect Degree that Uniformity which satisfies the Mind, and that Variety which pleases the Imagination. All its Episodes being necessary Lines which aim at the Centre of a perfect Circle. Where is the Nation who would not be pleas'd with the Interview of *Adam* and the *Angel*? With the Mountain of Vision, with the bold Strokes which make up the Relentless, undaunted and sly Character of Satan? But above all with that sublime Wisdom which *Milton* exerts, whenever he dares to describe God, and to make him speak? He seems indeed to draw the Picture of the Almighty, as like as human Nature can reach to, through the mortal Dust in which we are clouded.

The *Heathens* always, the *Jews* often, and our Christian Priests sometimes, represent God as a Tyrant infinitely powerful. But the God of *Milton* is always a Creator, a Father, and a Judge, nor is his Vengeance jarring with his Mercy, nor his Predeterminations repugnant to the Liberty of Man. These are the Pictures which lift up indeed the Soul of the Reader. *Milton* in that Point as well as in many others is as far above the ancient Poets as the Christian Religion is above the *Heathen* Fables.

But he hath especially an undisputable Claim to the unanimous Admiration of Mankind, when he descends from those high Flights to the natural Description of human Things. It is observable that in all other Poems Love is represented as a Vice, in *Milton* only 'tis a Virtue. The Pictures he draws of it, are naked as the Persons he speaks of, and as venerable. He removes with a chaste Hand the Veil which covers every where else the enjoyments of that Passion. There is Softness, Tenderness and Warmth without Lasciviousness; the Poet transports himself and

¹ A copy of the English original is in the British Museum: *An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, Extracted from curious Manuscripts, and also upon the Epick Poetry of the European Nations from Homer down to Milton*. By Mr. de Voltaire. London, 1727. My quotations are from this copy, pp. 105 ff. The French translation of 1728 I have not seen, but to judge from the specimens in the review in the *Journal des Savans*, 1728, pp. 517 ff., it was quite literal.

us into that State of innocent Happiness in which *Adam* and *Eve* continued for a short Time : He soars not above human, but above corrupt Nature, and as there is no Instance of such Love, there is none of such Poetry.¹

As was the case with Shakespeare, however, Voltaire had no sooner awakened an interest in Milton, than he arrived at the conclusion that an excess of admiration for this foreign poet might endanger the good taste of Europe ; the piquancy of having discovered Milton gave place—as soon as others began to occupy themselves with his poetry—to repentance for the momentary back-sliding which had led him to forget his responsibilities as the guardian of literary taste and propriety. Moreover, nemesis seemed to follow his praise of Milton with sinister rapidity : only a few months after his *Essay*, there was published the first translation of *Paradise Lost* into French, that, namely, of N. F. Dupré de Saint-Maur.² Voltaire veered round at once ; he expunged, as we have seen, as much of the praise as he reasonably could from his *Essay on Epic Poetry* before publishing it in French, and, from now on, his attacks on Milton were even more unscrupulous than his antagonism in later life to Shakespeare. He ridiculed the English poet in his *Candide*, and even parodied him in his *Pucelle*.³

Dupré de Saint-Maur had prefaced his version of *Paradise Lost*—it is in prose—by a translation of Elijah Fenton's *Life of Milton*, and, in collaboration with a certain Barret, he translated those papers on Milton from *The Spectator* which the first translator of that journal had not considered it worth while to present to French readers.

¹ The French text is only a weak echo of the last paragraphs : ' On fut étonné de trouver, dans un sujet qui paraît si stérile, une si grande fertilité d'imagination ; on admira les traits majestueux avec lesquels il ose peindre Dieu, et le caractère encore plus brillant qu'il donne au diable ; on lut avec beaucoup de plaisir la description du jardin d'Éden, et des amours innocentes d'Adam et d'Ève. En effet, il est à remarquer que dans tous les autres poèmes l'amour est regardé comme une faiblesse ; dans Milton seul il est une vertu. Le poète a su lever d'une main chaste le voile qui couvre ailleurs les plaisirs de cette passion ; il transporte le lecteur dans le jardin de délices ; il semble lui faire goûter les voluptés pures dont Adam et Ève sont remplis : il ne s'élève pas au-dessus de la nature humaine, mais au-dessus de la nature humaine corrompue ; et comme il n'y a point d'exemple d'un pareil amour, il n'y en a point d'une pareille poésie.' (*Œuvres complètes*, éd. Garnier, viii, p. 357.)

² Paris, 1727. Telleen (p. 142) enumerates over thirty editions, the latest in 1899.

³ In the *Table générale et analytique*, at the end of Voltaire's *Œuvres complètes* (éd. Garnier, lii, p. 169), will be found a list of the passages in which Voltaire refers to Milton. The most important are : *Essai sur la poésie épique* (viii, pp. 306 ff., 352 ff.) ; *Siècle de Louis XIV* (xiv, pp. 76, 133, 559 f.) ; *Candide* (xxi, p. 204) ; *Dictionnaire philosophique* (xviii, pp. 580 ff., xx, pp. 35, 396).

Addison's essays on Milton in French (*Remarques sur le Paradis Perdu*) passed through some ten editions in the eighteenth century,¹ and were usually printed with translations of *Paradise Lost*; and round these, we may say, as round a pivot, continental criticism of Milton virtually turned. Stirred to opposition by Addison's eulogy, Constantin de Magny devoted in 1729 a book to the criticism of the poem, a large proportion of it being, however, devoted to a censure of Milton's erring theology; while Bernard Routh, an Irish Jesuit, in his *Lettres critiques*, mingled warm praise with a great deal of irrelevant blame based on preconceived ideas of what epic poetry should be and do.² The intention of both these writers was to modify by their criticism the warm reception of Milton in France; but neither, in spite of a strong distaste for Milton's theology, could withhold words of praise in estimating Milton's genius. Consequently the interest in Milton was only stimulated, and Routh's letters were frequently printed with translations of *Paradise Lost*. Dupré de Saint-Maur's version—and, as the outcome of a lengthy and somewhat acrimonious controversy with regard to the authorship,³ it seems fairly well established that he deserves the main credit for it—was inaccurate and unsatisfactory; but it was eminently readable, even elegant, and certainly well adapted to introduce this strange foreign poet to an audience which must necessarily have experienced a shock on first acquaintance with him. The second translation—also in prose—appeared in 1754–55, and had as its author Louis Racine, the son of the great poet. Racine gave himself great pains with his work; he studied the Latin and Italian versions of *Paradise Lost*, and wrote a sensible and discriminating *Discours sur le Paradis perdu*, which is, on the whole, the best French contribution to Milton

¹ Subsequent translations were published by Élie de Joncourt, 1754, and L. Racine, 1755.

² C. F. Constantin de Magny, *Dissertation critique sur le Paradis perdu*, Paris, 1729; B. R*** [Routh], *Lettres critiques sur le Paradis perdu et reconquis de Milton*, Paris, 1731. In 1729 Nicéron summed up what was then generally known of Milton in his *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres*, ii (1729), pp. 145–61.

³ As to whether the translation was made by Dupré de Saint-Maur, by the Abbé de Boismorand, or by both. Telleen gathers the evidence together, *l. c.*, pp. 25 ff. The translation was well received by the French journals (*Mercure de France*, 1729, pp. 2882 ff.; *Journal littéraire*, xiv (1729), pp. 337 ff., and xv (1730), pp. 353 ff.; *Mémoires de Trévoux*, 1730, p. 1423); Spence (*Anecdotes*, ed. 1820, p. 36) states on the authority of the Chevalier de Ramsay: 'Since the translation of *Paradise Lost* into French, Milton begins to be greatly admired at Paris;' and Rollin inserted into the later editions of his *De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les belles-lettres* (e. g. 1740, vol. i, p. 233) a paragraph in praise of Milton. Reviews of Racine's translation will be found in the *Année littéraire*, 1755, vi, pp. 190 ff., and *Mémoires de Trévoux*, November, 1755, p. 2760.

criticism in the eighteenth century. Here, again, it might be noted that it is Milton's theology which gives most offence. But the want of freedom which straining after greater accuracy brought with it gave Racine's work a laboured impression which made it compare unfavourably with the earlier translation. So Dupré de Saint-Maur continued to hold the first place in the esteem of the French public. As early as 1730, *Paradise Lost* was supplemented by translations of *Paradise Regained*, *Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Lycidas*, and the *Hymn on the Nativity*; but these, by the Abbé Mareuil, were unfortunately indifferent in quality and attracted comparatively little attention.

Thus, from the critical years 1728–30 onwards, Milton was a well-known poet in France, perhaps the best known of all foreign poets;¹ yet the eighteenth century passed away before a really satisfactory translation of any of his works appeared. In spite of the interest which the French showed in Milton, the actual influence of the poet on French literature remained small and unimportant; imitations of *Paradise Lost* such as Durand's *La Chute de l'homme*, *La Christiade* by the Abbé de la Beaume (1753), or *Le Messie* by Dubourg (1777), are mediocrity itself, and will hardly bear comparison even with the religious epics of Bodmer and Lavater in Germany. It was clear that Milton's genius had, after all, no very firm hold on the French mind in the eighteenth century; and France could point to no criticism of Milton which penetrated beneath the surface or encompassed his poetic genius until the rise of the new romantic generation of poets and critics about a hundred years ago.

Meanwhile, two other peoples in Europe, the Italians and the Germans, were interesting themselves in Milton,² and in their appreciation of the poet were striking out into paths of their own; they showed themselves far less dependent on the pronouncements of the Voltairean oracle in the case of Milton at this early period than

¹ The various translations of the eighteenth century are discussed at adequate length by Telleen, *l.c.*, pp. 64 ff. *Paradise Lost* was translated by Le Roy (verse), 1775; Beaulaton (verse), 1778; Mosneron (prose), 1786; Luneau de Boisjermmain (prose), 1798. A free translation of *Paradise Regained* (in verse) was published by Lancelin in 1755, under the title *Le Triomphe de Jésus-Christ dans le Désert*. More popular than any of these was the paraphrase by Madame du Bocage, *Le Paradis terrestre* (1748). There is, it might also be noted, an echo of the Lauder controversy in the *Journal étranger* of 1754 (October–November).

² A recent work, *Giovanni Milton e l'Italia*, by Ettore Allodoli, Prato, 1907, gives a survey of the poet's relations to Italy. For Germany, the only publication dealing with the subject—apart from contributions to periodicals—is a dissertation by Gustav Jenny, *Miltons Verlorne Paradies in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, St. Gallen, 1890. This, however, makes no attempt to cover the field.

in the case of Shakespeare. It was, in fact, the Italians rather than the French who were the pioneers of a true critical appreciation of Milton on the Continent. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were many literary ties between Italy and England, ties in some respects quite as strong as those established by the Huguenot emigrants between England and France. Lorenzo Magalotti, Anton Maria Salvini, the Abbate Conti, Paolo Rolli, the translator of Milton, and Voltaire's friend Count Algarotti, had all either spent part of their lives in England, or were actively interested in English literature. The appearance of Rolli's translation of *Paradise Lost* gave a great impetus to Italian interest, and filled the Italian journals with informing notes and articles concerning the poet, which do not always give indication of having filtered through French periodicals.¹ *Del Paradiso perduto*, translated into unrhymed verse by Paolo Rolli, was published in London in a sumptuous folio volume in the year 1735, and attracted a great deal of attention, not merely in literary Italy, but in England itself, for Rolli was Italian tutor to the English royal family and evidently a *persona grata* at court.² This may fairly be called the best translation of Milton which the eighteenth century produced. Its chief fault, and a serious one, but imperfectly atoned for by the author's frankly expressed intention, is an extreme literalness, which tends occasionally to harshness, and offends against the spirit of Italian style and language; but it was the only translation into verse which succeeded in reproducing the dignity and sublimity of the original without falling into bombast.

Even greater significance must be attached to the points of agreement between Italian criticism and Milton's practice. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Italian critical theory, which, with the help of the Arcadians, had emerged from the vicious circles of Marinism, and passed through the scathing fire of French attacks

¹ See, for instance, the *Novelle della Repubblica delle Lettere*, Venice, 1730, pp. 76, 165, 206 f., 241 ff., 251 ff.

² Six years earlier, in 1729, Rolli published in London a translation of the first six books of *Paradise Lost*; but this I have not been able to see. The edition of 1735 was reprinted in 1740 at Paris and in 1742 at Verona. On Rolli see Allodoli, *l. c.*, pp. 92 ff. and 140 ff. Lorenzo Magalotti also began a translation of *Paradise Lost* (see *Giornale de' Letterati*, xiii (1713), p. 144, S. Fermi, *Lorenzo Magalotti*, Piacenza, 1903, pp. 251 f., and Allodoli, *l. c.*, p. 140). Anton Maria Salvini had likewise, if Bodmer is to be trusted (preface to the first edition of his translation of *Paradise Lost*), the intention of translating the epic, and C. Cordaro (*A. M. Salvini*, Piacenza, 1906, p. 44) mentions that fragments of a translation of Milton are preserved among Salvini's papers in the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence.

like that of the Père Bouhours, arrived at a stage when it could both appreciate Milton and draw support from him. Gravina had paved the way by his eloquent praise of Homer and Dante, and by his appreciation of qualities in these poets which were not compatible with the rationalism of Boileau's aesthetics; and L. A. Muratori had, in his plea for the supremacy of the imagination, freed epic poetry from a laming materialism and realism. In fact, although Muratori does not—in his *Della perfetta poesia italiana*, at least—mention Milton, that work might have been in great measure intended as a vindication of *Paradise Lost*. When Rolli's translation appeared, the Italians were thus better prepared than any other continental people to read Milton with understanding; and Rolli himself—as did his fellow countryman Baretti years later on behalf of Shakespeare—took up the defence of Milton when Voltaire singled out certain 'barbarian' liberties for special censure in his *Essay*.¹ Rolli's criticism does not, it must be admitted, show much acumen, and although he had some well-meaning ideas on the scope of epic poetry and the unreasonableness of the French limitations, ideas familiar in the more advanced Italian criticism of the time, he was but ill-equipped to meet so vigilant and unsparing an adversary as Voltaire. It is, however, significant for the kind of attention which Milton attracted in Italy, that Rolli believed he was doing the best service to the cause of Italian poetry, and especially of Tasso, by refuting Voltaire's fault-finding with Milton.

Unfortunately, this excellent beginning of Italian criticism in the early eighteenth century did not fulfil its promise. Muratori, Gravina, Conti, and others had familiarized their countrymen with a conception of the epic which justified Tasso and removed all obstacles from the way of an ungrudging appreciation of Milton; but the following generation of critics, men like Francesco Quadrio, Count Algarotti, and Saverio Bettinelli,² fell back once more on Voltaire. They had nothing for *Paradise Lost* but, at the best, cold patronage, and, at the worst, impertinent ridicule. Even that encyclo-

¹ Rolli's reply to Voltaire was written in English: *Remarks upon M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poetry of the European Nations*. By Paul Rolli, London, 1728. It was subsequently appended in translation to Rolli's *Paradiso perduto*. It ought also to be added that the latter was accompanied by a succinct and accurate Life of Milton. Baretti's *Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry*, London, 1753, also takes up the defence of Milton against Voltaire.

² F. S. Quadrio, *Storia e ragione d'ogni poesia*, iv (1749), pp. 285 ff.; F. Algarotti's correspondence in his *Opere*, Venice, 1791-4, x, pp. 39, 125 f.; S. Bettinelli, *Opere*, Venice, 1799, iv (*Dell' entusiasmo delle belle arti*), pp. 11, 76, 210, 313; xii (*Lettere inglesi*), pp. 179, 313. Cp. Allodoli, *l.c.*

paedic critic, the Abbate Giovanni Andres, or rather Juan Andrés—he was a Spanish Jesuit who wrote in Italian—is clearly under the influence of Voltaire in his judgements of English writers, but he at least claims for Milton the distinction of being the greatest of all English poets.¹ The stimulus of the earlier and more adventurous critics was not, however, lost; and it is to be traced more clearly outside Italy than in Italy itself. In Spain, for instance, Ignacio de Luzán, one of Muratori's most distinguished disciples, was the first Spaniard to draw attention to Milton,² and, in Germany, Johann Jakob Bodmer, who also owed his most vital ideas to Muratori, first created that interest in the English poet which Berge, nearly forty years before, had failed to awaken.

It cannot be said that the interest of Spain in Milton during the eighteenth century was more than an indifferent curiosity. As Luzán had translated parts of *Paradise Lost* in prose, so José de Cadalso translated some passages in verse; Luis José de Velázquez mentions, in his *Orígenes de la Poesía Castellana* (1754), a translation of *Paradise Lost* by Alonso Dalda as being 'the only translation from the English that we have', and Arteaga refers to another by Antonio Palazuelos; but neither of these is apparently to be traced, and it is not unreasonable to infer that they were never published.³ On the other hand, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos translated the first book of *Paradise Lost*,⁴ and the influence of Milton is to be seen in the work of Juan Meléndez Valdés, especially in his epics, *La Creación* and *La Caída de Luzbel*.⁵ Of Spanish criticism of Milton

¹ G. Andres, *Dell' origine, progressi e stato attuale d'ogni letteratura*, Parma, 1782-5, i, pp. 418 f.; ii, pp. 74, 103, 159-64. 'Il Milton è realmente il più gran genio, di cui possa tenersi onorata l'inglese poesia. La vastità dell' impresa ed alcuni passi sublimi del 'Paradiso perduto' gli danno la superiorità sopra tutti gli altri suoi nazionali' (ii, p. 74).

² See Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas en España*, v, 2nd ed., Madrid, 1903, pp. 29, 175.

³ *Orígenes de la Poesía Castellana*, 2nd ed., Malaga, 1797, p. 128. See also Menéndez y Pelayo, *l.c.*, vi (1904), p. 89.

⁴ G. M. de Jovellanos, *Obras* (*Bibl. de Autores Españoles*, xlv), 1858, pp. 26 ff.

⁵ See L. A. de Cueto-Valmar, *Historia crítica de la poesía castellana en el siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1893, i, p. 407. See also Meléndez' letters to Jovellanos in Cueto-Valmar, *l.c.*, iii, pp. 59, 61, 77 f. There are Spanish translations of *Paradise Lost* by J. de Escoiquiz, three vols., Bourges, 1812; B. Ramón de Hermida, two vols., Madrid, 1814; A. Galindo, Gante, 1868; D. San Martín, Madrid, 1882; and D. San Juan, Barcelona, 1883. Translations into Portuguese by J. A. de Silva (also of *Paradise Regained*), two vols., Lisbon, 1789; F. B. M. Targini, two vols., Paris, 1823; and A. J. de Lima Leitão, two vols., Lisbon, 1840. For my references to Milton in Spain I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. James Fitzmaurice-Kelly.

there is even less to say : and probably such opinions as the Spaniards formed of Milton at the end of the eighteenth century were drawn mainly from the Spanish translation of Andres' Italian work, which had considerable influence in Spain.¹ At a later date, Manuel José de Quintana discussed Milton from the standpoint of French classicism in his *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes*,² and became involved in a controversy with Blanco White.³

The question as to how Bodmer in Switzerland came to be attracted by Milton is one of considerable importance ; for it is closely bound up with the larger question of the origins of modern German critical theory. These are to be sought, by no means exclusively, as has hitherto been assumed, in England, but also to a large extent in Italy. As a young man, Bodmer had spent happy days in Italy, ineffectually preparing himself for a mercantile career, but browsing to his heart's content on Italian books ; the poetry and critical literature of Italy made him a man of letters and gave his thoughts that trend which they never subsequently lost. His interest in Milton, fanned into enthusiasm as it was at a somewhat later date by the study of Addison, was undoubtedly awakened in the first instance by his Italian friends.⁴ It was, above all, Muratori who opened the eyes of Bodmer and his fellow-worker Breitinger to the immense significance of Milton for the liberation of the poetic imagination which had been so long fettered by the rules of pseudo-classicism ; it was to a large extent due to the influence of the Italians that Bodmer was induced to translate *Paradise Lost*, and to set up that poem as an exemplar of the 'miraculous' in poetry. From Muratori Bodmer borrowed his doctrine of the 'fantasy' which he found so magnificently illustrated in Milton's poem ; Calepio taught him that the dicta of French classicism were by no means the incontrovertible dogmas they appeared to the greater part of literary Europe ; even Dubos' ideas seem to have in part reached Bodmer through Italian channels ; while Conti drew his attention to the dramatic genius of the English 'Sasper'.

With these stimulating ideas in his mind, Bodmer turned to *Paradise Lost*. After some difficulty he obtained a copy of the

¹ On Andres in Spain, see Menéndez y Pelayo, *l. c.*, vi, pp. 13 ff.

² *Variedades*, iii (1804), pp. 164 ff., 241 ff., 361 ff.

³ See *Correo Literario y Económico de Sevilla*, iv, pp. 177 ff., 201 ff., 209 ff. and 217 ff. The occasion of the Quintana-Blanco controversy was an imitation of *Paradise Lost*, *La Inocencia perdida* by Félix José Reinoso (1799). See Cueto-Valmar, *l. c.*, ii, pp. 122 ff.

⁴ This inference is to be drawn from the preface to his translation of *Paradise Lost* (1732).

English original, and set to work at once to translate it; and just as Dupré de Saint-Maur had, following the example of Madame Dacier's *Homer*, chosen prose as the medium of his translation, so Bodmer, in 1732, turned Milton into German prose—a clumsy and unwieldy 'Swiss' German, which the author repeatedly polished in subsequent editions, but never succeeded in polishing to any high degree of brightness.¹ It was virtually round this translation of Milton that the famous literary controversy between Bodmer and Breitinger, on the one hand, and the Leipzig professor Gottsched, on the other, took place.² Gottsched was at first not unkindly disposed to the Swiss translation,³ but as soon as he saw how the wind was blowing in Zürich he turned upon Bodmer with a virulence hardly surpassed even by his master Voltaire. To offer Milton to the German public as a curious example of the perversities of genius in a land like England, where good taste was only slowly gaining ingress, would have been pardonable; but to claim Milton as a master and to make *Paradise Lost* serve—and this was virtually what Bodmer and Breitinger did in their clumsy, ill-written tomes dealing with literary and critical theory⁴—as a text for Muratori's subversive theory that the imagination and not the reason was the more important factor in poetry, was quite another matter, and demanded, in Gottsched's eyes, summary treatment. To admit Milton's genius meant, as he very well realized, to endanger the foundations of the classic literature of the seventeenth century.⁵

But Gottsched was in the end worsted, and from the midst of the strife, even from the circle of Gottsched's own followers, there

¹ The data have been brought together by Hans Bodmer in the paper on *Die Anfänge des Bodmerschen Milton* already quoted. See also Th. Vetter, *J. J. Bodmer und die englische Literatur*, in the *Bodmer-Denkschrift*, Zürich, 1900, pp. 315 ff. The full title of the first edition of Bodmer's translation is 'Johann Miltons Verlust des Paradieses. Ein Helden-Gedicht. In ungebundener Rede übersetzt. Zürich, 1732'. Subsequent editions appeared in 1742, 1754, 1759, 1769, and 1780.

² The literature on the controversy is extensive: see F. Servaes, *Die Poetik Gottscheds und der Schweizer*, Strassburg, 1887; F. Braitmaier, *Geschichte der poetischen Theorie und Kritik von den Diskursen der Maler bis auf Lessing*, Leipzig, 1888; G. Waniek, *Gottsched und die Literatur seiner Zeit*, Leipzig, 1897.

³ *Beiträge zur kritischen Historie, &c.*, i (1732), pp. 190 ff.

⁴ Especially Bodmer's *Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie*, Zürich, 1740, and his *Abhandlung von der Schreibart in Miltons Verlohrnem Paradiese*, in the *Sammlung kritischer, poetischer und andrer geistvollen Schriften*, iii, Zürich, 1742, pp. 75 ff.

⁵ See especially the German translation of Bayle's *Dictionary*, which was prepared under Gottsched's supervision, Leipzig, 1741-4, iii, pp. 399 ff; iv, pp. 75, 162, 688 f.

emerged in Klopstock a genuine poet, the fountain-head of whose inspiration was Milton. Klopstock's epic *Der Messias* was the first important German poem of the eighteenth century, and it owed its inception and plan to the controversy about Milton and to the example of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In view of what has already been done by German scholars,¹ it is unnecessary to estimate again Klopstock's indebtedness to his English model. The general conditions of a religious epic as laid down by Milton were accepted *in toto* by Klopstock; the latter's attitude of mind towards the sacred story and his manner of approach are clearly influenced by *Paradise Lost*. The *dramatis personae* of the two epics show many points of resemblance, Klopstock's famous angel Abbadona being modelled on Milton's Abdiel; but with regard to the methods of characterization Klopstock's shadowy, lyric art, which appealed by suggestion, and Milton's vigorous dramatic power of presentation were at opposite poles. It is important, however, to notice that it was just the aspect of Milton's poetry which had appealed so forcibly to Bodmer, namely, his imaginative flights, his grandiose conceptions of heaven and hell, which inspired the finest passages in the *Messias*.

As far as the influence of Milton in Germany is concerned, the popularity of Klopstock's epic confused entirely the issue. From now on the production of religious epics in Germany was considerable—Bodmer himself and Lavater might be mentioned as cultivating this form of literature²—and this production undoubtedly kept the German public in touch and familiar with Milton, but there could be no question of an influence of Milton apart from that of his German imitator, and, indeed, one might go so far as to say there was none. In 1762 a new translation of *Paradise Lost* into German hexameters was published by F. W. Zachariä, a writer who had for a time contributed to the same journal—the *Bremer Beiträge*—in which the first three cantos of Klopstock's *Messias* appeared. But in spite of his use of verse Zachariä's work does not show much advance over Bodmer's: his knowledge of English—at least at the time when he made the translation—was insufficient for his task, and he has failed

¹ See especially F. Muncker, *F. G. Klopstock, Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Schriften*, 2nd ed., Berlin, 1900, pp. 117 ff., and cp. B. Zumbini's essay *Il Messia del Klopstock in Studi di Letterature straniere*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1907, pp. 153 ff.

² Bodmer's *Noah* appeared in 1750; Lavater's *Jesus Messias* in 1783-6, his *Joseph von Arimathia* in 1794. *Paradise Lost* no doubt also appealed strongly to Albrecht von Haller, whose early poetry—especially the didactic *Vom Ursprung des Übels* (1734)—shows Milton's influence.

to reproduce those finer qualities of Milton's verse that had attracted men of larger calibre such as Klopstock. A translation, the last of the eighteenth century in Germany, by S. G. Bürde, published in 1793, is now even more completely forgotten.¹ Thus, in spite of a deeper understanding for Milton's art in Germany than in France, it cannot be said—as it could be in the case of Shakespeare—that the Germans of the eighteenth century showed any superiority to the French as translators. In fact, of all the great poets of the world, Milton has, perhaps, been least satisfactorily translated into German, the reason being not that he is peculiarly untranslatable, but that the vital interest in him had waned before the era of accurate and painstaking translating began.

The only other continental country which, early in the eighteenth century, interested itself in Milton, was Holland. A Dutch translation of *Paradise Lost* in blank verse appeared in 1728 at Haarlem, this being the earliest of all the translations into verse. The author was J. van Zanten. A second translation—or rather paraphrase in Alexandrines of the first, for its author, L. Paludanus, was ignorant of English—was published at Amsterdam in 1730.² The previous history of Dutch literature might have led us to anticipate a particularly warm welcome for Milton in Holland, but the influence of *Paradise Lost* on the Dutch literature of the eighteenth century does not seem to have been great, and such influence as did show itself later in the century, probably came by way of Klopstock.

The foregoing survey of the gradual acclimatization of Milton on the Continent of Europe cannot but emphasize the close parallelism between Milton's case and that of Shakespeare. The first period,

¹ The earliest German translation of *Paradise Regained* is by S. Grynaeus, *J. Miltons Wiedererobertes Paradies, nebst desselben Samson und einigen andern Gedichten, wie auch einer Lebens-Beschreibung*, Basel, 1752. In 1781 an anonymous translation appeared at Mannheim. In the nineteenth century *Paradise Lost* was translated into German by J. F. Pries, Rostock, 1813; F. W. Bruckbräu (also *Paradise Regained*), 1828; Rosenzweig, Dresden, 1832; Kottenkamp, Stuttgart, 1841; A. Böttger (with *Paradise Regained*), Leipzig, 1846; B. Schuhmann, Stuttgart, 1855; K. Eitner, Hildburghausen, 1865.

² Reviews of these translations will be found in the *Journal littéraire*, xiv (1729), pp. 237 ff., and xv (1730), pp. 245 ff. Copies of both are in the British Museum, as well as of later ones by J. H. Reisig, Zutphen, 1791-1811, and J. F. Schimsheimer. Through the courtesy of Professor H. J. C. Grierson I am able to add some references to Milton in Dutch literature kindly sent by Professor G. Kalf of Leyden: P. Huizinga Bakker, *Poëzy*, Amsterdam, 1773, iii, pp. 115 ff.; H. van Alphen, *Theorie der schoone Kunsten* (an adaptation of a German work), 1778, p. xi; J. D. Macquet, *Proeven van dichtkundige Letteroefeningen*, 1780-83, ii, p. 88 ff.; W. Bilderdijk, *De Echt*, 1812 (*Dichtwerken*, 1856-59, vii); and W. de Clercq's *Dagboek* (1812), ed. A. Pierson, 1888, I, p. 34.

when Milton was virtually only known as a dangerous political writer, corresponds with the period during which Shakespeare was little more than a name to the continental peoples. In both cases it was Voltaire who stimulated a wider interest; it pleased his vanity to pose as the discoverer of these new literary wonders, but as soon as others—often with deeper understanding and more genuine sympathy than he—came forward to espouse the cause of the English poets, Voltaire turned round, and atoned for his earlier advocacy by proclaiming, with a hostility that was intensified as time went on, the gospel of good taste and common sense, and the supremacy of the reason. Again, as in the case of Shakespeare, we find Milton taking an extraordinarily firm hold on the German mind of the later eighteenth century, becoming bound up with every literary controversy that involved the progress of German poetry; whereas in France the most vital period for Milton's, as well as for Shakespeare's influence, is to be sought in the nineteenth century. But to sum up exactly what Milton meant for continental literatures in the eighteenth century, to trace his modifying and remoulding influence, especially on the literatures of France and Germany, is by no means easy. Works have been enumerated in these literatures which may be described as either direct or indirect imitations of Milton's art and style; but, as has been seen, France produced virtually no poem of even second or third rank modelled on *Paradise Lost*, and if we are obliged to give the *Messias* of Klopstock the first place among imitations of Milton it is less because of its intrinsic value than of its relative value for the poetry of its time and country. But the vital and life-giving influence of Milton is to be sought elsewhere. It was he who, more than any other poet, gave the sober rationalism of the earlier eighteenth century a tincture of fantasy. Just as, by reinforcing the Italian critics, Milton had broken the fetters of pseudo-classicism in theory, so he became at a later period an example to the young poets who were minded to do likewise. Even Voltaire himself, with all his antagonism, would never have dared his own higher imaginative flights had it not been for the abhorred examples of Shakespeare and Milton; occasionally in his epic and dramatic poetry we feel that he has the superhuman figures and the sublime *milieu* of *Paradise Lost* in his memory. In Germany this influence is more obvious and marked, although it came in most cases, as we have seen, through Klopstock; but, whether the immediate source was the *Messias* or *Paradise Lost* itself, there is no doubt that those Titanic figures with which Goethe's imagination wrestled in his early days at Frankfort—Prometheus, Mahomet, Faust—owe

not a little of their grandeur to Milton. Mephistopheles without Satan is as unthinkable as the cosmic framework of *Faust* without Milton's world as its model.

When we turn to the nineteenth century, a marked contrast presents itself between the history of Shakespeare's fame abroad and Milton's. While Shakespeare went on extending his kingdom, invading the most remote of languages, and gaining a footing on the national theatres of almost every civilized people, Milton's fame became in Europe, with the exception of France and, to some extent, Italy, a purely literary and bookish matter. The difficulty in the case of most of the smaller European literatures was that they had not shown any receptivity for English literary ideas until the eighteenth century was well-nigh over; and by that time the religious epic, and indeed the epic generally, had ceased to be a form of poetry into which a nation poured by preference its best inspirations. At the same time, it is strange that the Scandinavian peoples—especially when we remember the almost puritanic religious revival which affected the north, and more particularly Norway, early in the nineteenth century—should have been so little influenced by Milton, and that such influence as can be traced, came rather, as in the case of other literatures, by way of Klopstock.¹ In Germany, again, Milton had at the close of the eighteenth century expended his stimulating force, and had also lost his former interest for the literary classes. Wearied by the long-drawn-out publication of *Der Messias* in the previous century, the younger generation was inclined to regard the religious epic with indifference, if not with actual dislike. Neither Goethe nor Schiller in riper years advanced beyond a cold and critical attitude towards *Paradise Lost*, and the Roman Catholic and unpuritanic religious atmosphere of the German romantic movement precluded naturally that warm partizanship which was extended so readily to Shakespeare and Calderón. Germany was even more at the mercy of foreign influences in the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth: Shakespeare, Byron, Scott, Chateaubriand, Hugo, all left deep traces on her literature, but not so the poet of *Paradise Lost*. And this seems to have been true in general of all the Germanic peoples. Translations of Milton were welcomed by all interested in the great literature of the past, but no single German, Dutch, or Scandinavian poet was gripped by Milton's genius as, for instance, Chateaubriand

¹ *Paradise Lost* was translated into Danish by J. H. Schönhayder in 1790 (also *Paradise Regained*, 1792); into Icelandic by Jón Þorláksson in 1828; into Swedish by J. G. Oxenstierna, 1815; while both *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* were translated into the last-mentioned language by V. E. Öman in 1862.

was in France. Still fainter was the influence of Milton in Slavonic lands, for although these had not, like the Western European nations, outgrown the epic, Milton's uncompromising Puritanism, perhaps even the very vigour of his imagination, was not palatable to the lyric and melancholy genius of the race. Byron here, as generally in the south of Europe, was a more actual and impressive force than Milton had ever been.

But in France, as has been indicated, it was otherwise. One might even go so far as to say that the French literature of the first twenty or thirty years of the nineteenth century represents the most intense period of Miltonic influence on any alien literature. And the centre of the enthusiasm for Milton was Chateaubriand, who 'for thirty years of his life had read, re-read, and translated Milton'.¹ Madame de Staël rang in the new era with some noble words on Milton in her treatise *De la littérature* (1800),² but it was Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* which gave the emigrant literature its Miltonic stamp and colouring. With warm, enthusiastic, and affectionate penetration, Chateaubriand eulogized *Paradise Lost* in that work as it had never been eulogized before. The epic to him is, as a form of literature, superior to the drama, and Milton he would even place above Homer. But this was not Chateaubriand's first pronouncement upon Milton: in 1797 he had published his poem *Milton et Davenant*, and he had also given promise of his future appreciations in the *Essai sur la littérature anglaise* and in his criticism of Young (1801). His own prose epic, *Les Martyrs* (1809), is visibly inspired by Milton, and his essay *De quelques imperfections du 'Paradis perdu'* contains the warmest praise of all, for, not content with pointing out the 'imperfections', it also justifies them. In 1836 appeared Chateaubriand's own translation of *Paradise Lost*, which may without difficulty be claimed as the best translation of the poem into French prose.³ But as a translator Chateaubriand was not alone; translation after translation seemed to spring up out of the ground in those days in France, amongst them a notable one into French verse by the poet Jacques Delille, which appeared in 1804-5, shortly after the *Génie du Christianisme*. The French critical organs were constantly occupied in discussing Milton, and, indeed, so actual and real did Milton's world become to these men that they saw in it an apt reflection of the

¹ Preface to the *Essai sur la littérature anglaise*, *Œuvres complètes*, ix, p. 2. There is an excellent chapter on Chateaubriand and Milton in Dr. Telleen's book.

² *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, 1820-1, iv, pp. 309 f.

³ See *Œuvres complètes*, vols. viii and ix.

political events of their own day.¹ The enthusiasm of Chateaubriand was infectious; it passed over to other leading men of letters of the first half of the century. The dominant religious trend of Lamartine's mind would, one might have thought, have made him peculiarly receptive to Milton's influence; but that influence does not seem to have led to any direct imitation of Milton in Lamartine's poetic works; in this respect, Ossian was a much more important source of inspiration than the poet of *Paradise Lost*.² On the other hand, A. de Vigny was no doubt in his own epic poetry directly influenced by Milton, whom he introduced into his novel *Cinq-Mars*; ³ while Victor Hugo, in the famous manifesto of the *école romantique*, the Preface to *Cromwell* (1827), extends to Milton some of the enthusiasm he expresses for Shakespeare.⁴ This admiration of Milton spread in some degree to other Latin countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century, notably to Italy, where between 1800 and 1830 there were almost as many new translations of Milton as in France.⁵ Here Vincenzo Monti was a warm admirer of Milton, and in his own poetry shows constant traces of Milton's example.⁶

Milton was thus one of the forces which moulded the French emigrant literature and the more brilliant romantic poetry that followed it, perhaps an even greater force in stimulating the French imagination and the moral and religious forces that lay behind the literary revival than Shakespeare himself. It is difficult to keep asunder the many delicate threads of literary influence which manifest themselves in a modern period of literary history, and impossible to dogmatize with certainty as to the first source of any vitalizing poetic thought; but a generalization might in the present case be hazarded: of the three chief forces which influenced the French romantic move-

¹ Professor F. Baldensperger, of Lyons, draws my attention to this interesting testimony to Milton's actuality. The Council of the Devils seemed, for instance, to the *émigrés* the very likeness of the Comité de Salut Public (Clémenceau, *Le Vengeur des rois*, London, 1801, chant I^{er}, str. lv; Un officier de cavalerie, *De l'influence de la philosophie sur les forfaits de la Révolution*, Paris, n.d., p. 66).

² Lamartine's *Héloïse et Abélard* (1864) contains an essay on Milton.

³ *Cinq-Mars*, Paris, 1826, chapter xx and conclusion.

⁴ Milton is also one of the characters of the drama.

⁵ Allodoli enumerates no less than twelve between those of Silvio Martinengo and L. A. Corner, in 1803, and Andrea Maffei's in 1863. Mention should also be made here of a volume of Milton criticism by F. Scolari, *Saggio di critica sul Paradiso Perduto di Giovanni Milton*, Venice, 1818. For French translations in the nineteenth century, see Telleen, *l.c.*, pp. 122 ff.

⁶ Monti's *La Bellezza dell'universo* and *Prometeo* are clearly influenced by Milton. See B. Zumbini, *Sulle poesie di Vincenzo Monti*, Florence, 1886, pp. 3 ff., 107 ff. Cp. also V. Monti, *Opere*, vi, Milan, 1842, pp. 459 ff., and Allodoli, *l.c.*, pp. 123 ff.

ment from without, Shakespeare provided a poetic world rich in fancy and humour, and never out of touch with reality, the German poets satisfied the fantastic cravings of the romantic mood, while Milton deepened and reinvigorated the French imagination and taught it how to soar. His contribution to the French romantic ideas was thus in some respects the most fundamental and vital of all, but as a consequence it manifested itself more among those writers who prepared the French mind for the seeds of romanticism than in the romanticists themselves. Without what Milton had to give, it is difficult to see how the French could have become within the short space of a generation in so high a degree receptive to the imaginative world of Shakespeare and Goethe. Milton, in other words, helped to bridge the gulf that separated the negative critical spirit of the age of Voltaire from the positive and constructive epoch of romanticism. He deepened the national imagination, which had grown shallow and cynical; he helped to bring back to France that faith in God and man which the Encyclopaedists, followed by the Revolution, had destroyed; and he inspired Chateaubriand with the best elements in that most hopeful and promising of all the books which opened the new century, the *Génie du Christianisme*. This would seem to be Milton's peculiar mission at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and, in so far as he succeeded, he must be counted among the fundamental forces behind the evolution of our own age.¹

¹ It is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss the contributions of foreign nations to the scholarly investigation and criticism of Milton's life and work, but mention might be made of A. Geffroy, *Étude sur les pamphlets politiques et religieux de Milton*, Paris, 1848; E. de Guerle, *Milton, sa vie et ses œuvres*, Paris, 1868; Taine's criticism in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, ii, pp. 327-435; and E. Scherer's essay on *Milton et le Paradis perdu* (*Études sur la littérature contemporaine*, vol. vi, pp. 151 ff., Paris, 1876), in French; A. Stern's *Milton und seine Zeit*, three vols., Leipzig, 1877-9, in German; and B. Zumbini's essay in *Studi di letteratura straniera*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1907, pp. 61 ff., in Italian.

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